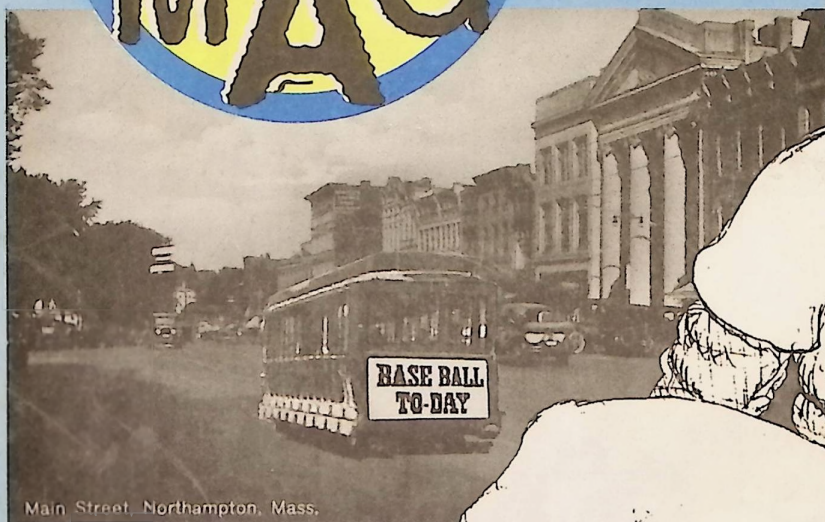
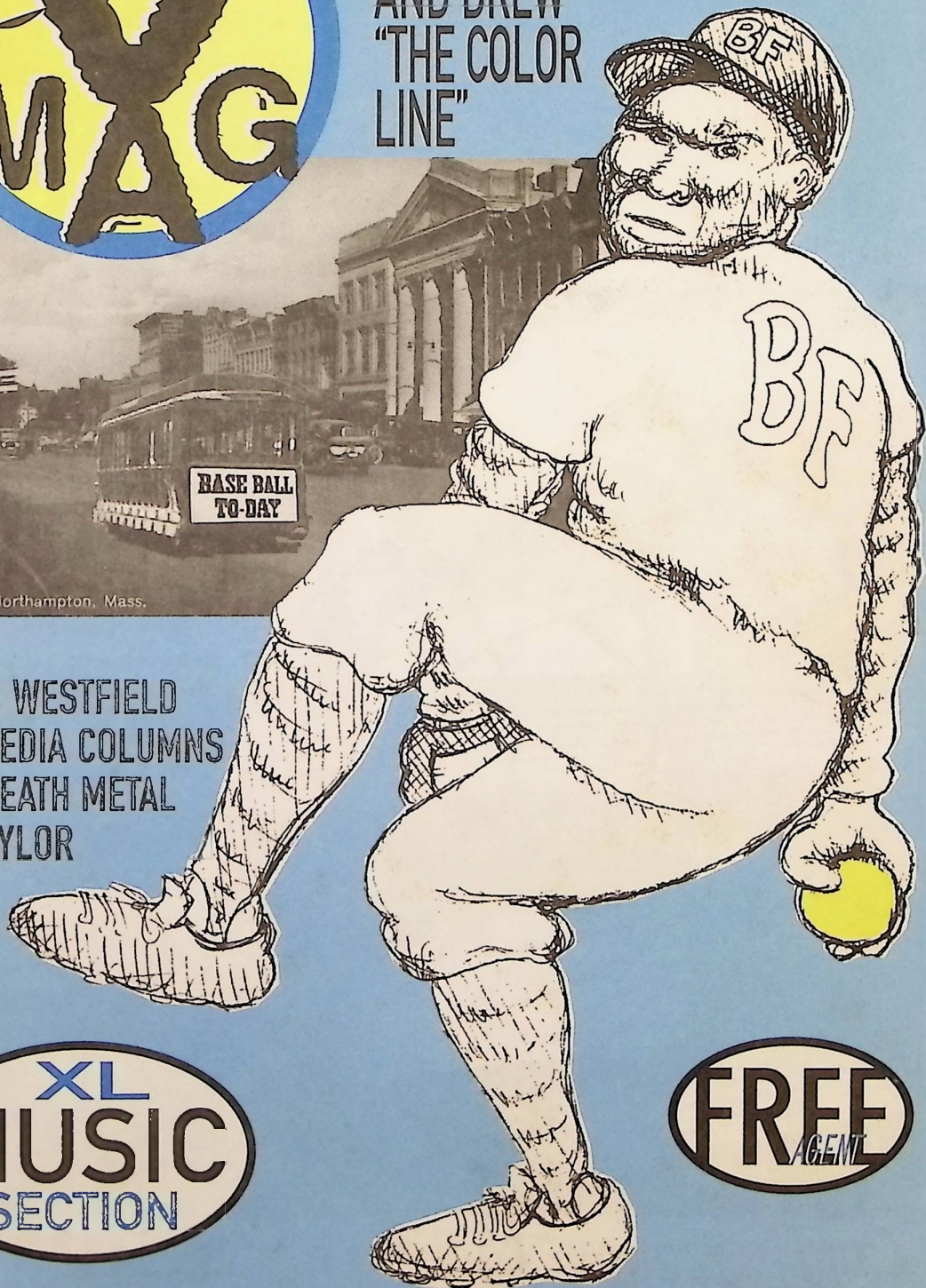


THE YEARS NORTHAMPTON
WON THE PENNANT —
AND DREW
"THE COLOR
LINE"



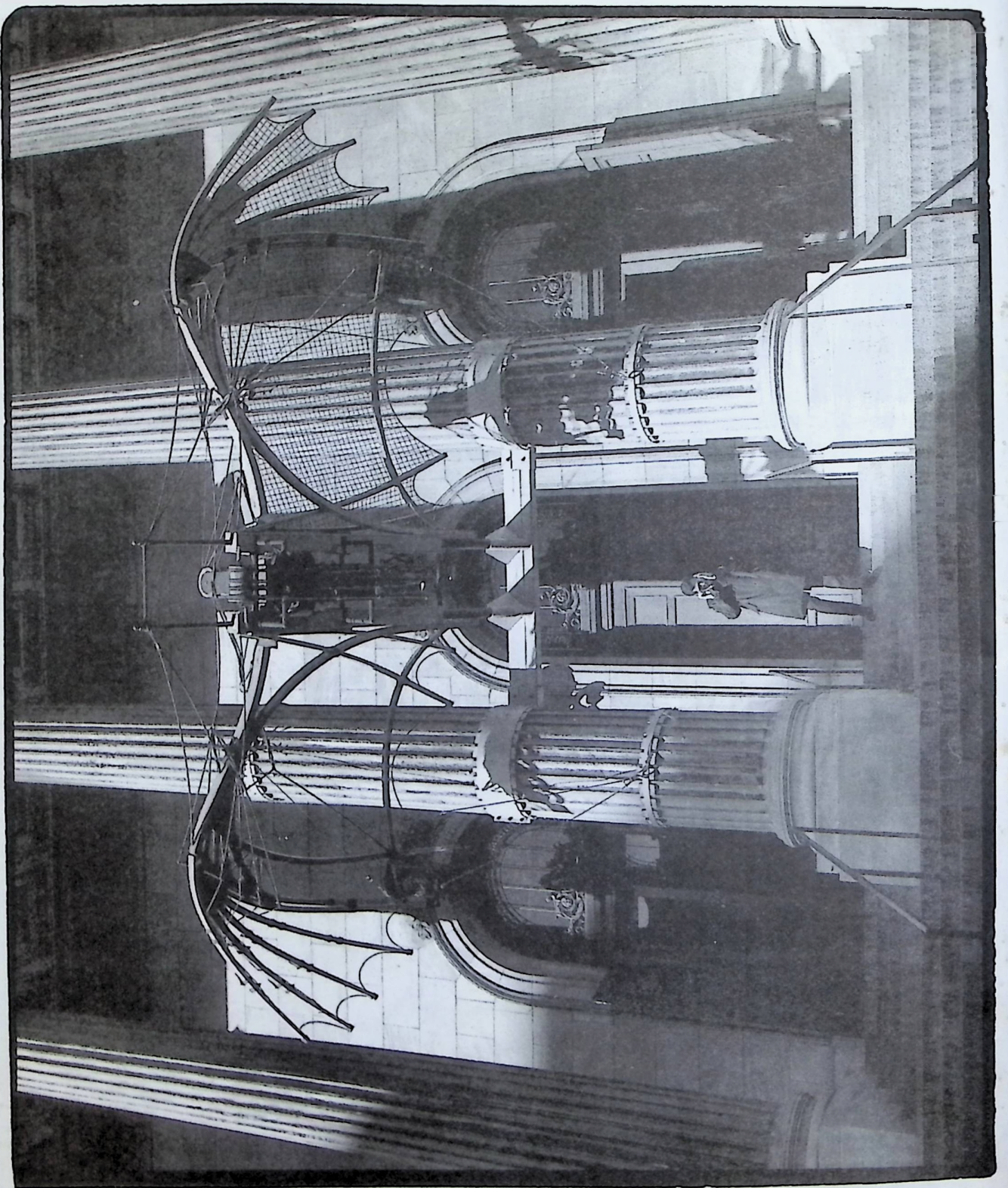
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PLUS:
GUIDE TO WESTFIELD
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OP EDGE

by Robert Tobey



#21 AUGUST 1999

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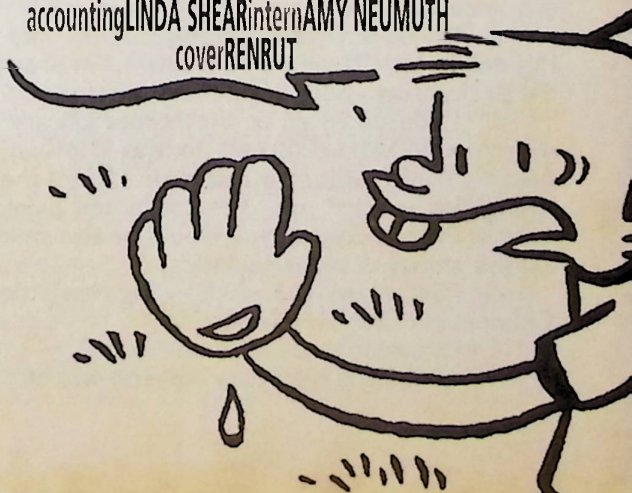
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account executive AUNDRIA THEOCLES mvp assistant ANDREA CARLIN
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THE YEARS NORTHAMPTON WON THE PENNANT—



BY BRIAN TURNER

Born in 1899, Jim Ryan will soon be able to say he's lived in three centuries. His birthday falls during the World Series, which is appropriate since he loves to talk baseball. In the 1920's he played ball with the semi-professional Florence Braves. Even now Florence men of snowy hair and uncertain gait come up to Jim and call him their "boyhood hero."

It was Jim who told me that the city had a minor league team, the Meadowlarks. "They won a pennant, I'm pretty sure, because I remember all the excitement. But I'm not sure what year."

I offered to go to the Forbes Library and check the newspapers on microfilm. When I returned, Jim was in a lawn chair outside his kitchen door. Before I could gather my materials, I heard the clicking of his metal cane, saw him toiling toward me. We sat at the picnic table and reviewed old box scores. I assumed the type would be too small for him to read, but he studied the names without squinting.

"Bill Luby," he said. "Big man, slow in the field, good hitter. Connecticut League: Meriden."

"How do you remember that?"

"Well, you might say baseball was all I cared about," he said.

AND DREW "THE COLOR LINE"



"A TOY AFFAIR?"

In 1912 the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* asked, "Will some director of the base ball club kindly inform the public just what kind of league this is? Is it a toy affair or is it to be run in the manner which most leagues adopt?"

The *Gazette's* anxiety was not unfounded, for the Twin State League operated on the periphery of "organized" baseball. In 1911 the Twin State League was a "D" league, the lowest rung on the minor league ladder. By 1912 it was no longer party to the "National Agreement" that governed the minors. The league's lowly status did not affect Jim's fascination with the players.

"The players lived at the

Bay State Hotel," Jim said. "They dressed there and walked in their uniforms up to what we called the Driving Park at the fairgrounds, where the ball field was, in the racetrack. I waited at the corner of Fair Street and pestered the players to let me carry their cleats, then walked to the gates with them and got in free. I was their 'assistant.'"

"Is the grandstand the same today?"

"Mostly. They had bleachers along third base. It cost extra to sit in the grandstand. I was lucky to have a nickel for the trolley," Jim said. "Of course, back then, movies were just starting and radio was mostly static. Not many folks had cars, so going to a game was a thing you could do on an afternoon."

"If I went to a game with my father," Jim said, "we'd take the trolley. The Bay State trolley used to run from where Northampton Cutlery was. We got on the trolley there, and that brings you right up to Bridge Street, where you'd get off. They used to have a sign on the trolleys saying, 'Base Ball To-day.'"

"My father could go on a Saturday or a holiday. He was a working man, you know. The only time a real good crowd came was on the Fourth of July. People worked until 6 o'clock, and the game started 3:30. No one could afford to take off work. But we'd go four to five times a year. I don't know how anyone made any money on those teams," Jim said.

"Based on what I've read," I said, "they didn't."

THE NORTHAMPTON BASE BALL ASSOCIATION

Manufacturers, merchants and professional men formed the Northampton Base Ball Association and named Bill Luby as manager. Luby, along with minor league veterans Marty Conroy and Jimmy "Crabber" Burns, formed the nucleus of the team. The Association signed a lease for the Driving Park in the fairgrounds, home to Northampton teams since 1891.

"The Driving Park was a nice place to see a ball game," Jim Ryan said. "You were close to the play, lined up along first or third, the whole park ahead of you. All the towns around had ball fields at the fairgrounds. But the Driving Park was the best."

I asked Jim about a play the *Gazette* described: "Such a foul fly is seldom seen in these parts. [The fielder] jumped the rope fence and making his way around autos and teams picked the ball off

a horse's back. It takes some nerve to do that trick." Jim said, "People parked their cars and horse-and-buggies behind the ropes and stood to watch the game."

On occasion the *Gazette* expressed its dissatisfaction: "Fair Street should be sprinkled just before the game starts and shortly before it ends. The condition of that street after yesterday's game was disgraceful. More than one person was heard to say, 'I will never come here again till I know some effort is being made to keep down the dust.'"

The *Gazette's* competitor, the *Daily Herald* also found fault, but used a touch of humor. "The painter who made [the scoreboard] made but one set of figures so that when three scores were made in two different innings no figure three could be found and the boys keeping the board had to put up a six. It served the purpose, but it was perplexing to newcomers."

THE GAZETTE'S "COLOR COVERAGE"

"You say the Twin State had a black player?" Jim Ryan asked. "That surprises me. It was O.K. to play against colored players, like Chappie Johnson's All Stars. We played them when I was with the Braves. Or the Cuban Giants. They weren't really Cuban, they just pretended to talk Spanish, but everyone knew better."

Yet, in 1911, Bellows Falls fielded a black catcher, Bill Thompson. Baseball researcher Seamus Kearney says that Thompson, not Jackie Robinson, is this century's first African-American in "organized" baseball. According to Kearney, the color of Thompson's skin passed almost without comment in the Vermont and New Hampshire press.

By contrast the Northampton papers engaged in racial stereotyping. In an account of a "Chinese" team from Hawaii, the *Gazette* wrote, "Northampton fans have seen their things done up by Chinamen, but the visiting Orientals failed to 'do up' the Larks." The writer scoffed at the one-sided score, 12-1, and the 10 errors committed by the "Chinese." "They all looked alike and played alike," wrote the *Gazette*.

Still, at the start of 1912, the *Gazette* reported with equanimity that Thompson might play again. Thompson, "the colored chap who made good behind the bat for Bellows Falls last year," was to join Brattleboro, said the *Gazette*. But Thompson was injured and didn't play that year, so Northampton's tolerance wasn't tested—not yet.

MEDIA BRICKBATS, MEDIA BOUQUETS

The tone of the *Gazette's* coverage ranged from unabashed boosterism to brow-beating: "Let [the fans] make the choice as to whether they want to see league base ball enough to pay a quarter to support their team. We have men here who are patriotic enough to let their feelings run into the cash drawer and who do not 'measure their patriotism by the money its costs them.'"

The *Gazette's* preoccupation with finances may have been influenced by one of its editors, J. L. Best, who was a director (and a leading stockholder) of the Northampton Base Ball Association.

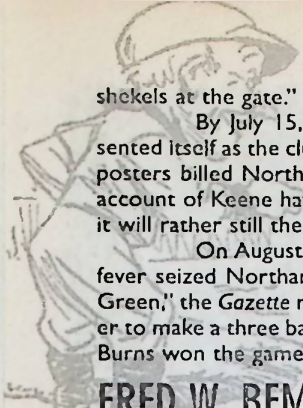
On opening day at the Driving Park, the Larks defeated Keene 2-1 in 12 innings, a game the *Gazette* declared "the greatest ever played in Northampton." Said the *Gazette*, "[Keene] grew hysterical with joy when they pried the cover off and tallied a run. It looked like victory for the speedy New Hampshire nine, but the Larks came back with wings distended and flew to victory by scoring a brace of runs which sent the large crowd into spasms of joy."

The *Gazette* account was intensely detailed, providing the sort of play-by-play today's fans get from TV or radio: Gaudet "shot one off the bat down inside the first sack. Speedy Foran maintained his popularity with the crowd by hitting safely. Choinard delivered a smashing single, Foran rounded third on the heels of Gaudet and followed him closely to the plate. It was a wild scene when Speedy crossed the plate, and the fans who had streamed onto the field gave long and enthusiastic cheers."

"We wanted write ups of the game in the *Gazette* and *Herald*," said Jim Ryan. "The town team was what we cared about. We didn't follow Boston or New York, other than the standings."

I asked Jim if he saw a difference in the *Gazette* and the *Herald*. "The *Herald* was popular in Florence," he said. "I delivered 'em both and always sold more *Heralds*. It was a workingman's paper you might say, with photos, more of them, and comics."

When the Larks lost, the *Gazette* could be unforgiving. "In order to offset the groanings of the hitherto loyal fans, [the Larks] must win. If they lose there will be no hope for Manager Luby's pets, a team must continually win if they expect to rake in the



shekels at the gate."

By July 15, however, after the Larks moved into first place, the *Gazette* presented itself as the club's defender. Of Carnival Day on August 3, the *Gazette* wrote, "The posters billed Northampton as the 'league leaders' and considerable fun was made on account of Keene having passed the Larks. Now that Northampton is again in the lead it will rather still these all around crabbers in our midst."

On August 10 the Larks stood at 18-11, three games up on Keene. Pennant fever seized Northampton, and merchants took advantage of the euphoria. "Druggist Green," the *Gazette* reported, "has offered a box of cigars to the first Northampton player to make a three base hit in the Driving Park grounds." On August 14, shortstop Jimmy Burns won the game with a triple, and won the cigars.

FRED W. BEMENT—"ADVERTISING SPECIALIST"

Meanwhile, the Association's most visible director, Fred W. Bement, was being celebrated in the *Gazette*. Bement planned a Labor Day extravaganza, a "Carnival of Sports" with "aeroplane stunts," and an open invitation to Teddy Roosevelt, then campaigning on the Bull Moose ticket.

The *Gazette* declared that Bement was the "advertising specialist," to whom "fans and players who are interested in the future of baseball in this town, [should] take off their hats and loudly acclaim his ability to produce the goods, and his belief in the value of unlimited advertising."

Bement may have basked in the praise, but not in the sun. Rain on Labor Day washed out his "Carnival of Sports." The rain also caused the cancellation of several key ball games, a blow to the team's finances.

An air of optimism prevailed, and rightly so: "[A] fan took the trouble to pencil some dope and it was discovered that if [we] canceled Wednesday and lost Friday and Saturday that our percentage would be .568, and that if Keene played and won yesterday and wins the two remaining games that their percentage would be .565, or three points less."

In other words—rain-outs and debts be damned—Northampton had clinched the pennant!

A TRIUMPH—AND RENEWED DOUBTS

Reviewing the 1912 season, the *Brattleboro Reformer* said, "There is no doubt fans have been given faster base ball," but it may well be considered whether the increase in speed has been worth the cost. How easy it is to let enthusiasm get the better of judgment."

Baseball researcher Seamus Kearney concurs that the Twin State League was on a destructive course. When "other leagues broke up and good players became available...[a] strong addition to the roster at the time could mean the pennant. Every year the agreed-upon salary limit was breached and every year baseball became more expensive."

Over the winter Northampton sought to add Greenfield to the league as a regional rival. Along with Greenfield and the Larks, the Twin State League now consisted of the Brattleboro "Islanders," Keene "Medics," Bellows Falls "Pulpmakers" and Newport "Polar Bears."

Fred Bement became "acting president" of the Base Ball Association. Bement, in turn, appointed Jimmy "Crabber" Burns as manager, replacing Bill Luby.

"We called Burns 'Crabber,'" Jim Ryan recalled, "because he was always crabbing at umpires."

Marty Conroy, the team's leading hitter, moved up river to manage Greenfield, and hired away the Larks' ace pitcher, Rube Sager. Burns was forced to recruit players wherever he could find them, and this, along with the league's uncertain status, complicated matters for Northampton.

A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY

The greatest complication was player eligibility. Team owners argued that no player belonging to a team in another league should play. Yet a season-long charade was played out in which owners challenged the eligibility of players on opposing rosters while themselves carrying players from higher leagues. As part of the charade, players took false names.

So did many college players, or as the *Brattleboro Reformer* put it, "clean, manly young fellows, full of pepper and anxious to represent well a town they [think] a pretty

good place in which to summer." As late as 1914 collegians still "played for pay" during summer break, but some colleges had banned the practice, and more threatened to do so. The confusion was apparent as names, often fake, appeared and disappeared from team rosters.

The *Gazette* celebrated one new recruit: "'Bill' Granfield who went to Cincinnati two weeks ago was rated the best third basemen in college baseball and in addition is a heavy sticker."

Granfield's name never appeared in a box score. "The Larks have [a new man] for tomorrow's game," amended the *Gazette*, "a major league player who for various personal reasons is not playing organized ball. He will be known as King, and judging by his exhibition in practice this morning will be classified by fans as 'King' of them all."

In spite of having "King" (Granfield) in camp, Northampton pressed the question of eligibility at league meetings. There was "a motion by Mr. Bement that, in future, games participated in by players who are officially claimed by another league should be thrown out. The motion was unanimously carried."

But the greatest uproar of all was over a player who never wore a Twin State uniform except to warm up. The racially-charged Wickware incident of late August would prove to be a blot on Northampton's season and the city's reputation. But that was in the last weeks when the Larks' defense of the pennant was at stake, and feelings were already running high.

THE FALL AND RISE OF GREENFIELD

The Larks started fast, winning eight of their first 11 games. On the Fourth of July Northampton defeated Greenfield in both ends of a double-header. The Larks took the morning game 3-0 in Greenfield, then traveled to the Driving Park where, before 2000 fans, they beat Greenfield, 6-3.

The low point for Greenfield came on July 18 when they stood at 4-12, dead last. The Greenfield manager, ex-Lark Marty Conroy, was dismissed.

After a spell of .500 ball in mid-July, the Larks momentarily fell from first, but rallied. On July 21 four teams were tied for first: Northampton, Newport, Bellows Falls, and Keene. Even Greenfield had moved up, largely because Brattleboro was worse.

On August 2, surveying the field from first place, the Larks raised the pennant with every expectation that they

would repeat as champions. The *Springfield Union* wrote, "The Valley Fire and Drum corps led a procession from Main street to the game, and there Major Keyes, president of the league, presented the pennant to director Bement."

"The pennant," reported the *Gazette*, "is 18 feet long, five feet wide and colored blue with white letters, reading, 'Northampton, Twin State League Champion, 1912.'" The *Herald* described the players holding "the banner to their backs and in this manner marched to deep center amid applause and the tooting of auto horns."

The ceremony was a jinx, however. For the better part of August, the Larks lost 12 of 15 games and fell to third place. Greenfield, meanwhile, was streaking, and took first with a 22-18 record. Since firing Conroy, Greenfield had won 18 games and lost four. The *Recorder* anointed the resurgent nine the "Climbers."

When it was time to play the Larks again, Greenfield fans traveled south by auto and train. "Greenfield was aided by 300 cowbell artists," the *Gazette* complained, "in one of the noisiest base ball battles seen here in years." After Greenfield won, the *Gazette* grouched, "One game like yesterday's will do for the entire season."

ELIGIBILITY ARMAGEDDON

By mid-August, the "eligibility" question roiled the Larks and the league: "King, who has been playing third base for Northampton, has been protested by Manager Leonard of Bellows Falls, and consequently could not play yesterday. The basis of Leonard's contention is that King, who is 'Billy' Granfield, belongs to a Southern league team."

Among the Twin State stars the directors suspended were Keene's Smith (Minneapolis), Newport's Brickley (Philadelphia, AL) and Crowther (New Haven), and Bellows Falls' Briggs (New Haven) and Martin (Philadelphia, AL). Umpires went to the mound before each game and announced the names of suspended players, then the batteries.

"The merry game of protesting keeps on," noted the *Springfield Republican*. "First it is one team and then another that has a man who looks too good, and then the kicking begins." The *Republican* claimed that Bellows Falls would lose a third of its team in the eligibility war.

If so, that might explain the action Manager Leonard of Bellows Falls took next—hiring black players. The "col-

ored battery," Wickware and Bradley, was to face Northampton.

THE WICKWARE INCIDENT

In 1913 Frank Wickware played for a black team, the Mohawk Giants of Schenectady. Possessed of a blistering fast ball, Wickware was notorious for instructing fielders to sit down as he struck out the side. The Larks had their reasons for avoiding Wickware, but the fact that he was black was the one they made public.

On August 26, Manager Jimmy "Crabber" Burns refused to let the Larks take the field. The umpire forfeited the game to Bellows Falls.

The correspondent for the *Bellows Falls Times* sounded one of the grace notes of the controversy: "Wickware, the colored pitcher, said nothing but he seemed to feel the situation keenly, and anyone must feel it is a hard position for the colored boys."

The Bellows Falls townspeople were incensed: "Banquet Hall was crowded this evening at the most enthusiastic baseball meeting ever. The local directors were endorsed in their action for to-morrow's game with Northampton and were told to go ahead and use the colored men for the remainder of the season if they saw fit."

Of the mood up river, the *Gazette* wrote, "On every street corner and on all the trains throughout the day the color question was being discussed. It is the general feeling that the Northampton team and their followers were entirely in the wrong."

The *Gazette* rationalized Burns' decision: "The color line is drawn in organized baseball. The Twin State league recognizes orders from that commission, refuses to play a ball player when ordered not to, [so] why not in drawing the color line." The *Gazette* added, "Wickware is the pitcher the Chicago Nationals refused to play against last Sunday in Schenectady and throughout the country the Chicago Cubs were upheld in their actions."

Looking back, Jim Ryan said, "It seems so foolish, keeping blacks out of baseball. Half of them were of major league quality, the rest were good enough for the high minors. What's baseball for if it isn't playing the best? But people didn't see that, and you have to wonder why."

DRAWING THE COLOR LINE

At first the *Greenfield Recorder* straddled, then temporized—then ducked.

"One ground alleged for the objection is that colored men work cheaper, which the white players say works against their interest," said the *Recorder*. The writer went on to argue, "It seems fundamentally unjust when a fellow can not be accepted on his merits as a man and a ballplayer, particularly in a section where there is no congestion of the black race, and where these people are both harmless and a willing and industrious element."

In the end the writer evaded the question: "The player was hired in for the occasion, a proceeding which is objectionable, regardless of race."

A week later, at the league meeting, the Greenfield team took this logic further and reformulated the question so that it turned not on racism but on the "hiring in" of "outside players"—in other words, eligibility—a great favor to Northampton's cause.



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Newspapers from cities outside the Twin State circuit were not so easily deterred. The *Springfield Daily News* wrote, "This is probably the first time in the history of Vermont that a team of professional baseball players has refused to play against a colored man." The *Daily News* cited Bill Thompson, the catcher for Bellows Falls two seasons before.

The *Springfield Union*, too, was critical: "Inasmuch as the Twin State league is not in organized ball, Burns' stand is uncalled for in the Twin State league, or in New England for that matter, where the colored race has for years taken a prominent part in athletics. Just what the Twin State league directors do in this case is problematical, as they have never followed any law of logic in their decisions this season."

Fred Bement didn't help matters when he sent President Keyes a letter that appeared in the *Gazette* and other papers. It said, in part, "This league is 'black' enough, without adding 'niggers' to it, and if we are obliged to recruit from Africa, to sustain our organization, we might as well give up the ghost."

Not every statement in the Northampton press was so intemperate. The *Herald*, regarded by the city's establishment as "sensational," criticized Burns' action: "If Burns had no other reason for disappointing a lot of people who came to see a ball game than because of the color of an opposing player, he has magnified greatly the importance of his own and his players' private prejudices, which, when you come to think about it, have nothing to do with the game."

Then again, the *Herald* didn't have an editor who was a director of the Base Ball Association.

AS THE TWIN STATES TURN

On August 29 the Larks traveled to Bellows Falls, but Wickware did not appear. "Blacks Not Needed," said the *Gazette*. "Plain White Players Have No Trouble Trimming Larks, 10-3."

"The stands were crowded with eager fans (half of them women)," observed the *Gazette*, suggesting that racial equality was a matter of inordinate concern to women. "The exhibition put up by the Larks was so poor that the crowd thought the Larks purposely made a joke of the game. It was the Larks' pitchers who made a joke of the game."

By the time the Twin State directors gathered in Keene, the other teams in the league had turned against Bellows Falls. The *Greenfield Recorder* wrote, "The management of the Greenfield ball team feels sympathy with Northampton—Bellows Falls is playing a sharp game, and the colored boys will have to have their own teams." The *Brattleboro Reformer* wrote, "Here, as elsewhere around the league, there is considerable feeling over the attitude of Bellows Falls. Bellows Falls is using every means to win the pennant, even to receiving the remaining games on forfeit."

Only the *Herald* stood fast: "Is the game of baseball a parlor affair that cannot be entered into before one's social standing has been

proclaimed? Are a colored man's hands any dirtier than a white man's as he pitches the ball? This mock sentiment of over nice ball players looks too theatrical to be sincere, but it is not likely that general public will back up the view as strongly as Mr. Bement seems to think."

On September 2, the Twin State league directors voted to bar "colored players." Only Bellows Falls dissented.

STILL MORE EFFUSIONS

Speaking for the Northampton Base Ball Association, Bement issued a second letter, a letter as overwrought as it was widely circulated. A Bellows Falls player was alleged to have struck a 15-year-old Northampton telegram messenger named Williams, who was black.

Wrote Bement, "An emissary is despatched to find and send to Northampton a negro killer, well-armed with spiked shoes, to kill every boy 16 years or under. This brave solon of Southern chivalry, after one brave, desperate swing, succeeds in bruising one harmless, fun-loving lad, then leaves town by freight."

The *Brattleboro Reformer*, no partisan of Bellows Falls, chided the Northampton director: "Mr. Bement should read something besides his own effusions in the papers."

The headline on the front page of the *Herald* cried, "Bellows Falls Tells Bement to Set His Brakes Before He Hits Something." The *Herald* quoted its correspondent: "This fellow is hurting the Twin State league." The piece concluded, "The league race is a sport not a war."

Later still, on September 29, the *Gazette* gave Bement space to "report" on the final meeting of Twin State directors. Even then, well after the season was over, Bement couldn't resist his worst impulses. "The Bellows Falls game, known as the 'coon' clash, was allowed to stand," Bement declared.

Other newspapers declined comment. The *Gazette*, having afforded Bement the final word, and one last slur, allowed the controversy to pass.

HAMP PULLS A FAST ONE

"Greenfield will be with us," said the *Gazette*, relieved to be abusing Greenfield fans again and off the vexed question of race. "The cowbells, fish horns, and old junk, which were brought in August have been barred by the Police Department. The best in rowdyism and muckerism are things of the past."

In an act of stunning hypocrisy, Northampton "hired in" a player "for the occasion." Murray Parker of the Hartford Class "C" team pitched the first game of the Labor Day double-header.

Northampton claimed that Parker, who hadn't lost a game since June 14, had come in a "trade" for a catcher named Muldoon—even though Muldoon had departed Hamp two months earlier. Parker (or "Sherman" as he was called for the game) easily handled the Greenfield batters, winning 3-1.

Of the 700 Greenfield fans who had come down to the Driving Park, the *Gazette* reported that "though their team was beaten, they marched with banners flying and the band playing." For the afternoon game, Northampton "men, women, and children trailed the Larks to Greenfield, the 1:48 train putting on extra coaches and special electric cars to accommodate the crowds."

The *Greenfield Recorder* reported that fans "at the

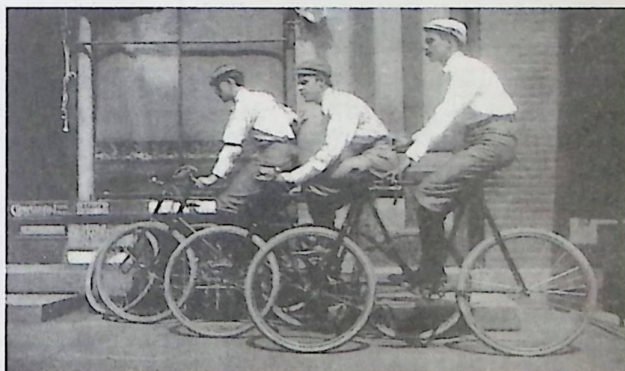
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ticket sellers' office pushed and jostled each other. The usual automobile space was filled, and a line of motors occupied the south end of the grounds back of center field. A line of men and boys roosted on top of the fence."

Northampton won the second game, 6-1. Jimmy Burns hit a home run that "cleared the left field fence by 10 feet. All Jimmy did was take a dog trot around the bases. Those who had started in by calling him a crabber and other such names let up after his performance."

Greenfield protested the morning game, but "Burns [had] papers to prove Parker is a free agent. Whether he will play anymore games with the Larks or not is left to Burns. But we don't want him anymore. We got what we wanted," crowed the *Gazette*, "two games from Greenfield."

A week later, when the Larks met Greenfield for the last time, the Larks won, 4-3. The headline in the *Recorder* said, "Wednesday's Sad Occasion": "The winning run came when Sager with three men on the bases forced in the runner by giving a free pass."

The *Recorder* refused to condemn Sager, the ex-Lark who had pitched Hamp to a pennant the year before: "Sager has been the backbone of the pitching force, and anything like that is unusual for him. The baseball public has every reason to be satisfied with the results of the season. A fine quality of baseball has been given."

BASE BALL BANQUET

The Larks were champions—again. A "banquet was held in the summer garden at Rahar's Inn," reported the *Gazette*. "It was 10 o'clock when the ball players and directors, followed by about 40 fans, wended their way up Main Street to partake of the menu provided by Landlord Rahar."

The toastmaster, Judge Henry Field, congratulated the "gentlemanly manners of the players and the judgment and wisdom of the management." He "jokingly referred to the [game] at Bellows Falls which was called on account of 'darkness.'"

Director Timothy J. Collins related how he had been enticed onto the board by "the remark that there would not be anything to do [only to find] that he was expected to purchase a stock certificate at an outlay of ten plunks, also take tickets at the gate, chase foul balls, pick up bats, sit on the bench and sweep the grandstand after each game."

Treasurer George W. Swift addressed the financial difficulties the club had faced. Starting with a \$1200 debt, and adding \$800 for pre-season games, the debt had been reduced over the course of the season to \$500. "This report was received with cheers and much applause."

Among the stockholders and subscribers named in Swift's financial report were many of Northampton's professional elite, lawyers, insurance men, mill supervisors, doctors, journalists and the Registrar of Deeds. The smallest contribution, \$2.00, came from Calvin Coolidge, destined in 1923 to become President of the United States.

THE END OF PRO BALL IN HAMP

The 1914 season was abysmal. Attendance dwindled, the team's debt grew. The Association hired a new manager, Florence's Dave Shea, then replaced Shea with Marty Conroy, but the Larks fell into last place. The raising of the 1913 pennant was the only highlight.

During the winter Northampton and Greenfield plotted to form a league without Bellows Falls. But Bellows Falls trumped the conspirators, and Northampton and Greenfield were presented with an ultimatum—pay \$1000 to stay in the league or quit. They quit. The era of professional baseball in Northampton had come to an end.

The next year was the last for "the fast little" league, as it was called. Minor leagues were contracting everywhere. In 1918, of the 10 leagues that started the season, only one finished.

"I loved seeing professional baseball while it was around," Jim Ryan said, "but I had my own interests, and wanted to play ball more than watch it."

Without the Association to pay for its upkeep, the Driving Park field fell into disuse. Jim and other Florence Braves cut the grass, raked the infield in the 1920s. But as the decade wore on the Braves played at the Smith agricultural school, now Smith Vocational.

"It wasn't nearly as nice," Jim said, "but the school maintained it, and since all

we did was pass the hat, and with the depression coming on, we couldn't afford much else."

Today, all traces of the field are covered by outbuildings for thoroughbred racing, and the grandstand is empty except during the fair. Even thoroughbred racing has been scaled back, and may stop altogether.

I drove Jim to the fairgrounds. As we passed the grandstand, he pointed his cane to where home plate was, on the racing track's infield edge. In the distance the Holyoke range formed a rolling green backdrop, the Summit House a gleam on the summit.

"They restored the Summit House," I said, "so why not the old ball field where the Meadowlarks won their championships?"

"That would be nice," said Jim, "but I don't think the town could support it. They barely supported it then."

Jim Ryan, it seems, has no time for sentimentality. I, however, imagine the Twin State pennants of 1912 and 1913 stored in some attic, eventually rediscovered and raised again over a restored field. I imagine Hamp having a chance to set things right, having the grace to field its team when a new Wickware comes to town.

But the record stands, as does the fact that many of Northampton's leading citizens, and one of its major institutions, were aligned for one summer with the forces of Jim Crow.

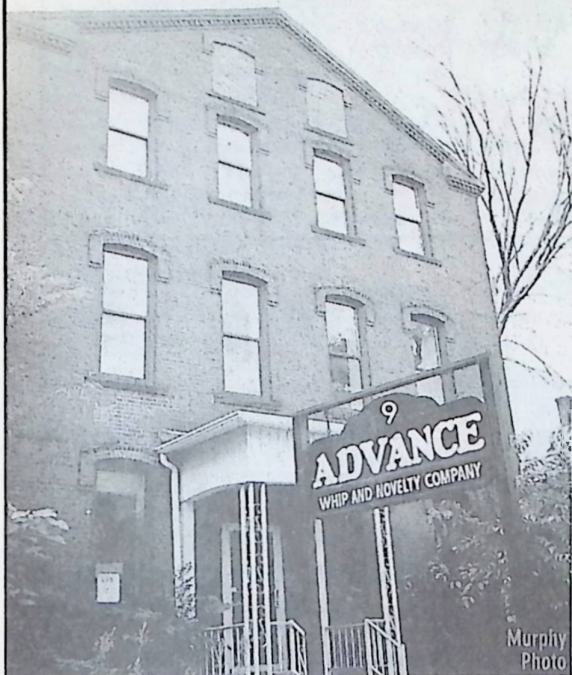
Photos: p2 (left), 1912 Meadowlarks, from *Daily Hampshire Gazette*; p2 (right), Wickware from *Only the Ball Was White*; p8 (below), Jim Ryan of the Florence Braves c. 1926, courtesy Florence Historical Society.



WHIP IT GOOD

A GUIDE TO WESTFIELD

BY GREGORY SAULMON



There are plenty of ways to get to Westfield — Rte. 10 from Northampton, Rte. 20 from Agawam and Springfield, the Mass. Pike, but the most dramatic is Rte. 202 through Holyoke. Perhaps my favorite stretch of road in the Valley, 202 winds its way up **East Mountain** and past **McLean Reservoir** before offering up a spectacular view for the descent into Westfield.

Straddling the border between the two towns is **Finis**. This is the type of roadside ice cream stand that beckons you to pull over and sit on the hood of your car as you enjoy a sundae and a summer evening. Just up the street is the **Hampton Ponds Plaza**, a necessary stop if you have kids in tow. There's **Mass Skate**, a skateboard/snowboard shop with clothing, accessories, and the largest skate park in all of Massachusetts; **Annie's Attic**, the local toy/children's clothing mainstay; the **Kid's Footwear Outlet**; and **Little Explorers**, a learning center for children. While **Hampshire Scuba** and **Fitness** caps off the plaza's retail establishments, there are also two restaurants; **Lido's Pizza** has pies as well as grinders, and **Golden Peacock Chinese** is the home of a formidable hot and sour soup. The plaza takes its name, of course, from **Hampton Ponds**, the summer hotspot right across

the street. The ponds are a popular destination for swimming, boating, and fishing.

Continuing west takes you past **Froggy's Saloon**, **Daniele's Restaurant** (specializing in pizza and grinders), the now vacant **Caldor's** distribution center, and to the crossroads of 202 and 10. Here stands the **Purple Onion**, arguably the Valley's consummate roadhouse. Taking a right leads to Southampton; going straight leads to the hills. Go left.

Along this section of Rte. 10 are **Cafe Santorini**, offering lunch and an inviting ice cream patio; **Silvestri's Italian**, home of the ever popular pizza/grinder tag team, and **New England Pizza and Grinders (!)**. Other landmarks on this side of town include the **Apremont Memorial Park**, a small roadside tribute to the **104th Fighter Wing**, stationed at the nearby **Barnes Municipal Airport**. When the 104th was recently called to action in Kosovo, Channel 22 treated it as the biggest local event since the return of Barry Krieger. Barnes also hosts a popular air show every summer. If you're into gawking at military might and/or large, hairy, shirtless men gawking at military might, this is one event you shouldn't miss.

As Rte. 10 approaches the center of town it passes a Mass. Pike entrance, a new restaurant called the **Northside Grill** which advertises seafood, steaks, pasta, and even a Sunday brunch, **Most Excellent Comics**, where there's always a pile of little BMX bikes by the door, **Elm Pizza** (and grinders), **Music + Plus**, with one of the best selections of new and used vinyl in Western Mass., and an abandoned looking building with a sign out front that reads **Advance Whip and Novelty Company** (one of the businesses that

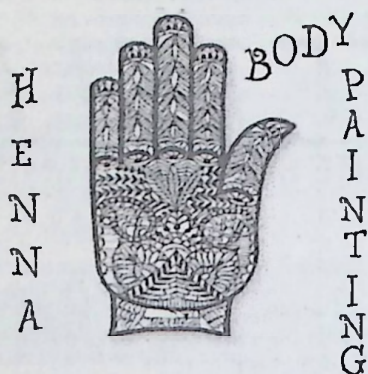
provided Westfield its nickname of "Whip City"). And then there's the bridge over the Westfield River, the site of a daily traffic snarl that could make the Coolidge Bridge blush.

I bumped into Mark Schwaber of the band **Hospital** on one of my research trips and asked him what there was to do in downtown Westfield. "Well," he said, "there are 31 places to get your hair cut." Westfield's downtown is like so many others across the country, where vacant storefronts create an illusion of emptiness, where services (i.e. hairdressers) spring up like mushrooms where retail establishments have either died or fled to the strip malls on the edge of town. But Westfield can not be accused of giving up on its downtown, and is taking many of the proper steps needed to resuscitate its main street. The town common is immaculately maintained, and the public library, the **Westfield Athenaeum**, is housed in an historic, architecturally stunning building. Annual events such as the aforementioned air show, the **Church of Atonement Strawberry Dinner** (136 years and counting), and the **Taste of Westfield** ensure a decent amount of foot traffic. Visitors will be pleased to discover free, one-hour on-street parking, as well as abundant free parking in off-street municipal lots.

The fact that the emptiness is only an illusion adds to downtown Westfield's appeal. The mix of retailers is diverse. **Erin's Own Irish Imports** has everything from shamrock key chains to Aran sweaters, and a few doors down **Walton Irish Music** may be the area's only source for bodhran drums, bagpipes, and tin whistles. If you're not doing cover songs from the **Commitments** soundtrack, a decent selection of guitars, basses, amps and even high school band instruments can be found at **Performance Music**.

While mountain bikes may have overrun the rest of the nation, BMX rules in Westfield; the place is crawling

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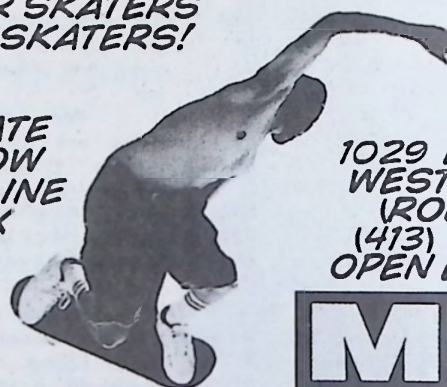
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with kids riding bikes outfitted with pegs (which I hadn't seen since 1987), and they undoubtedly get them at Custom Cycle BMX. Those looking for mountain bikes and ten-speeds will find them at New Horizons Sports.

Cobbler Shop Shoes now includes a full fledged men's haberdashery, while fans of used clothing should be sure to check out Seconds Please, an enormous consignment clothing store. Be sure to head downstairs in order to check out the many, um, curiosities, at Curiosity; collectible retro (original) homewares, an art gallery (featuring work by Angry Johnny, amongst others), and "kustomized" tables and chairs by the Road Agents. Crazy Moon is the town's best bet for young women's clothing, as well as all the accessories necessary for an instant alternative makeover. There are two bridal shops downtown: A Day to Remember features new and consignment dresses, accessories, and invitations, and Down the Aisle Bridals offers both dresses and tuxedo rentals.

The title of Westfield's most unique shopping experience goes, hands down, to a pawn shop type place called Buy and Sell. As I stood outside looking at the guitars hanging in the window, the owner came out to greet me. I asked him how he was doing. His reply: "Ugly as ever." Then I noticed the newspaper clipping in the window, a full page feature from the Union News. The owner, as it turns out, is a bit of a local celebrity. If you donate to the store's Jimmy fund can, he makes a special "ugly face" for you. The one I got consisted

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Tales Resold

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of him pulling his lower lip up to the bridge of his nose, crossing his eyes, and wiggling his ears. This alone made the trip worthwhile.

There's only one bookshop downtown, but it's a good one. **Tales Resold** features a huge selection of used and out of print books, with an emphasis on mysteries and Harlequin romances. Other shops worth noting include **Lambson Furniture**, **George's Jewelers**, **Manufacturers Outlet** (party favors to tikki torches to laxatives), **Ethnic Foods**, **The Tobacco Barn**, and **Connections Unlimited**, which is the only store I've ever seen that sells cell phones, beepers, Beanie Babies, and Pokemon cards.

The downtown area isn't short on good restaurants, either. I'd count the **School Street Bistro**, with its elegant dining room, cozy lounge, and excellent food among the best restaurants in the Valley. The menu in the window of **Piccolo's** earned this upscale Italian restaurant a spot near the top of my list of dining out priorities. **Davio's**, a Greek/Italian/American restaurant with both a pleasant dining room and a bustling take-out pizza/grinder business is a great spot for family dining. **The Foster House** also bills itself as a family style restaurant, specializing in prime rib. Lobster fans should check out the **Sheraton Inn**, an old fashioned New

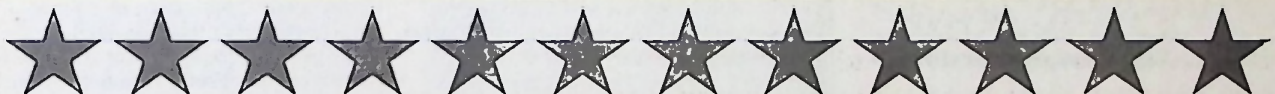
England inn built in 1814. A friend of mine didn't even know I was working on an article about Westfield when he mentioned that **Leo's** was the best deli he'd ever been to: **The Farmer's Daughter**, a bakery/delicatessen looks promising. Rounding out downtown's dining options are **Pasquale's**, **Burgundy's**, **Real China**, **EB's Express**, **Barney's**, **The Good Table**, **Foxgloves**, and the **Maple Leaf Inn**.

There are a few other attractions downtown worth mentioning. The **Discover Westfield Children's Museum**, **Edwin Smith Historical Museum**, and **Jasper Rand Art Museum** are enough to satisfy the whole family's intellectual curiosity. Nightlife in Westfield is limited to **Elm Street Billiards**, **Gabby's** (a club featuring both dance nights and live bands), and a few bars: **Touch Down**, a sports bar located in the **Davio's** building, **The Nook**, 252 Elm, **Kelleher's Tavern**, and a place with a sign that simply reads **Cafe**.

A hair-raising rotary circles the town common, and here **Rte. 20** passes through Westfield. The eastern leg leads to a perfect example of what I've dubbed the New American Wasteland. One side of the street is a line of car retail/repair places, interrupted only by the **China Star Buffet**. On the other side of the street sits a strip mall so large it's probably visible from space. All the national

chains you'd expect to see have nestled here like ticks. There are, however, a few hidden jewels here. **Between Rounds** is a bakery/deli specializing in fresh bagels and unique sandwiches. It's an excellent choice for a quick lunch. **Woody's** is a casual lunch and dinner place offering a wide selection that includes ribs, chicken, calzones, pizza, and, of course, grinders. **Points East**, a prime rib and seafood restaurant, huddles in the shadow of an enormous, hangar-shaped **Serv-U**. There's also **Panda House Chinese**, which is next door to **Platterpus Records**. **Platterpus** is probably the best reason to visit this part of Westfield. Small but well stocked with new and used CD's, it also features one of the best selections of local artists around.

Taking **Rte. 20** west leads to Westfield's best known and best loved attraction, **Stanley Park**. Situated on 200 acres, the park is home to a rose garden that is a popular site for weddings, as well as plenty of space for picnicking, hiking, and sports. Another road, **Franklin Street**, also heads west from Westfield's center and passes **Tekoa Country Club**, a well maintained and challenging golf course. **Franklin Street** eventually merges with **Rte. 20** at the **Four Mile Country Store**, one of the last traces of civilization before the road strikes out for a scenic stretch through **Chesterfield** and **Russell**.



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**Northampton City
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reviews



BRAD MEHLDAU ELEGIAC CYCLE Warner Brothers

Brad Mehldau, classically trained as a child, continued his education at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan as part of the Jazz and Contemporary Music Program. On his new CD, **Elegiac Cycle**, he pays tribute to all his heroes with influences including Beethoven and Brahms as well as Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett. In the past, Brad has worked in the trio format as leader, and has performed and recorded with other artists, most notably Joshua Redman. **Elegiac Cycle** is Brad Mehldau's first solo effort.

The term "elegiac" refers to a sad or mournful piece of music. This isn't just sad music. As Brad explains, "Mourning is healing" and "looking back." For the musician it is the challenge to move forward and create, acknowledging the past without being governed or limited by it. Lofty intentions? As Mehldau states, "It is my hope **Elegiac Cycle** can be enjoyed as a transparent work," and that "it's not necessary to know the inner workings."

"Cycle" is the form used. Nine original pieces penned by Mehldau are tied together melodically with themes revisited, sometimes played as counter melody, and sometimes inverted. The models for these pieces are classical. However, almost all involve improvisation of a decidedly jazz model.

The CD begins with "The Bard," whose theme is repeated throughout the work. "Resignation" exhibits Mehldau's uniquely fluid sense of time-keeping. "Memory Tricks" starts as a somber piece that intricately evolves into a rag sounding like a silent movie score, and then returns to its somber theme and ends in a jagged burst of notes.

"Elegy for William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg," the fourth cut on the CD, begins in a melancholy vein and then begins to subtly swing. Brad's style is reminiscent of the impeccable technique of Oscar Peterson and infused with the soul of John Lewis. "Lament for Linus" is a brief melody and the only composition previously recorded (**Art of the Trio, Vol. I**). "Trailer Park Ghost" is an uptempo piece that pays homage to the genius of Bud Powell. "Goodbye Storyteller (for Fred Myron)" is a pretty ballad full of yearning and an elegy to one of his mentors. The CD ends with two pieces of classical nature. "Rückbick," a German word meaning look back, is a piece that refers to much of the melodic and harmonic material that precedes it. "The Bard Returns" completes the cycle with a return to the original theme.

Some may question whether this is jazz. However, this is a haunting and beautiful solo effort that is a delight to listen to and is expertly crafted by one of our most talented young pianists.
- Bud Callahan



TAGYERIT TUBEMAN Wabbit Recordings

TagYerit. It took me a little while to get it, but I'm a little slower than most. There are thirteen wonderful tracks on **Tubeman** and these guys are straight outta Amherst yo. The group is comprised of songwriters Richard and Floralee Newman and they are joined on the disc by The Fabulous Heavyweights' Fred Hazelton on drums. Rich pulls bass and background duties and Flo is on guitar and lead vocals. I gotta admit these songs are a little fruity. If you take yourself real seriously and are into that jaded, urban sophisticate thang, then don't get it. However, if you want a group of styl-

istically original songs, backed with excellent musicianship, interesting and fun themes, and a great voice -- here it is. TagYerit's sound is some mixture of bluesjazzrockfusionishslightlybohemian-hippything and that is about the best I can come up with in way of description. I was at times reminded of the better Bongwater material, only sans the gross-out lyrics. The production was lush and superb and local heavyweight Ed Vadas is responsible. He did a great job and this is one of the best produced recordings from the Valley I have ever heard. Song themes range from the personal ("The Hike," "Connections," "Milestones," and the really funny "Embarrassed"), to odds to musicians ("Music Makers"), pirate radio ("Outlaw Radio Guy"), and those "friends" we all have ("Betya"), to some quirky tunes ("Tubeman," "Wendy Bird," and "Sci Fi with Space Leprechaun Appearance"). There is also an environmentalist anthem ("Dreading") that isn't overly preachy and obnoxious (I didn't think it could be done). Yeah, they're self-admitted tree-huggers, but the album is still great and Flo plays a wicked cool rabbit-shaped guitar. Check them out at www.tagyerit.com or send stuff to TagYerit, P.O. Box 0823, Amherst MA 01004-0823. They also have a '95 release called **Heavy Construction** available.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce



BIJOU PHILLIPS I'D RATHER EAT GLASS Almo Sounds

I hesitate to right off the bat, refer to Bijou Phillips as John Phillips (of The Mamas and The Papas') daughter. But there, I said it, and I won't mention it again. I hesitate because I don't want

music

you to instantly categorize Bijou as the kid of a star, who maybe really has no talent other than having enough connections to put out an album.

Aren't we lucky that isn't the case ('cept for the famous Daddy). **I'd Rather Eat Glass** is Bijou Phillip's debut album, which is an instant favorite of mine. I adore this album, and the fact that the brilliance comes from a 19 year-old makes it even cooler.

Bijou's voice is sweetly pleasant and soothing, but also incredibly strong. "Polite" lets her showcase her range best. "I Never Shot the President" is her quick-talking and sassy view of prostitution. "Big Dipper" is Bijou's ode to her mother and the summers spent at her house. The lyrics for the song are simple, but conjure strong images of summer anyone can relate to. And her songs on love ("Hawaii," "Just Look Around," "I Am A Mountain" for example) each take their own original spin.

There really isn't one song on **I'd Rather Eat Glass** that I'm opposed to. It's got beautiful lyrics, beautiful vocals, and beautiful music. Overall, I'd say it is... beautiful.

(Almo Sounds, 360 N. La Cienega Blvd., LA CA 90048)

- Aundria Theocles



CAPTAIN BEEFHEART GROW FINS Revenant

Those of you familiar with the highly unique output of Captain Beefheart (Don Van Vliet) and his Magic Band know that the Captain ceased all musical efforts in 1982 to make painting a full-time vocation. As time marched on, his albums were released on CD at an excruciatingly slow pace. One of my favorites, **Strictly Personal**, was only

released a couple of years ago, allegedly because it was his LEAST favorite (this has been the case with so many great albums in recent years). A few Beefheart bootleg recordings of live and obscure material have made it into record stores during this time, but this set is surely the motherlode.

At a whopping five CD's, it's at first daunting, but so many pains have been taken with this project that you quickly find yourself totally engrossed in the Captain's bizarre world. Right off the bat you're struck by the decadently opulent packaging. A heavy-duty, high quality printed box gives way to an equally impressive slide-out hard cover book that's over an inch thick. It includes a fascinating bio of the Magic Band written by former band member John "Drumbo" French, as well as the five CD sleeves. Even a longtime fan like me is likely to be bowled over. Like many geniuses, Beefheart was often a hard person to work with, and the book (way too thick to be called a booklet) gives an honest history, warts and all. With a musical career that spanned more than two decades, Beefheart expanded on his interpretation of blues music, evolving it into a most unusual amalgam. He played a mean blues harp, and embraced "free jazz" with his wild soprano sax stylings. Sung in his trademark Howlin' Wolfish growling voice, his off-the-wall lyrics remain among the most interesting and entertaining of all time. His several exciting incarnations of the Magic Band are all here, and French manages to elicit commentary from most former bandmates with the notable exception of Mark "Rockette Morton" Boston, whom he was unable to locate. From the seminal years with such luminaries as Rising Sons' Ry Cooder and Gary Marker, through Antennae Jimmy Semens, The Mascara Snake, Zoot Horn Rollo and beyond, it's all here in the 112 pages of history.

Though much credit is due for the many fine musicians he worked with over the years, Beefheart is the supreme catalyst. It was almost cult-like, the way he ran these mens' lives, but it paid off in spades. Quirky as this music is, it sure influenced a lot of people. The collection starts off with ancient tracks from even before the A&M days, bluesy but way out even then. The next two are mostly outtakes from **Safe As Milk** and the **Trout Mask Replica** sessions (considered by most fans as his best album ever). There's a disc of later live cuts mixed with oddities and radio blurbs from sev-

eral stations including WBCN in Boston from 1972. As luck would have it, I happened to have been there at the time and vividly remember him scrawling *Don't get into this elevator... you're taking your own life in magic marker on the elevator door*. But, that's not all. One disc is devoted to videos from several points in the Magic Band's history. This computer-enhanced CD is compatible with both PC and Mac, and contains a handfull of full length songs from both TV and concerts, and even a couple filmed on a California beach.

The set is a limited addition (3000 copies worldwide) and is street priced in the \$60's. The book is chock-a-block with ultracool photos printed on high quality glossy stock in full (and sometimes dizzying) color. If you're new to the Captain, you might want to choose a less expensive foray like one of the above mentioned albums. But if you're already a fan, not only is this an important piece of rock n'roll history, but likely also to become quite collectable as an investment. If only all box sets could be as generous and well thought out as this one is.

(Revenant Records, POB 162766, Austin TX 78716-2766 /

beefheart@revenantrecords.com)

- Meathook Williams



THE DELUXTONE ROCKETS THE DELUXTONE ROCKETS FANMAIL HERE COMES FANMAIL EP Tooth & Nail Records

Two new releases from Seattle's Tooth & Nail Records are wildly different in style and quality. The

reviews

Deluxtone Rockets have put out a solid Rockabilly album with that too-typical So-Cal flavor. The tunes are good, not great, and the disc is worth buying if you are really into the genre. There are no real losers on this eleven track release, and tracks nine and ten, "God's Cadillac" and "Rumble With The Devil" respectively, really stand out from the rest. The photo of these guys is a little too cool for me; all tattoos and grumpy faces, typical Brill Creamed hair, etc. The band includes: Johnny "The Ace" Rocketti on lead vocals and guitar, Jimmy Dean on upright bass, Jason "J.J." Sorn on drums, Tim Tahoe on trumpet, Jacob "The Enforcer" Dykema on tenor sax, and Richard "Ricardo Venezuela" Mittweide on trombone. They can be reached at *The Deluxtone Rockets*, POB 970043, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 or on-line at deluxtonerockets@hotmail.com. I'm wondering why a Michigan band sounds so So-Cal and why they recorded everything on said coast, but whatever. In the band's thank-you's, there are lots of references to Jesus, God, and their individual churches which puts the two songs I've mentioned in a somewhat different light, I think, maybe, I dunno. Anyway, this is a good first release and I'm glad to have it in my collection.

Now on to the second release, **Here comes fanmail**. This is a four song EP, with a full album to follow soon. It includes three really crappy originals and a miserable cover of "Every Breath You Take." This is Scott Silletta on his own with a band behind him and is just as miserable as his old stuff. He's on vocals and guitar, both on the disc and the touring band. The disc was recorded with Nick Garrisi on guitar, Erik Tokle on bass, and Chuck Cummings on drums. Since they are all in real bands, Scott put together a touring band that includes Shawn Humeston on bass, Dale Yob on guitar, and Jason Feltman on drums. The songs on this EP are clearly sub-standard modern rock boredom and hopefully will go nowhere near any radio play. I just can't wait to review the full-length. fan-mail can be reached at fanmail, c/o *The Militia Group*, POB 592, Westminster, CA 92684-0592 or on-line at xtmxgx@aol.com.

So, a mixed a pair. Just remember that Tooth & Nail is putting out some great stuff and can be reached at *Tooth & Nail Records*, POB 12698, Seattle, WA 98111 or on-line at www.toothandnail.com.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce



THE GYPSY WRANGLERS STEP IT UP AND GO!

Prowling the range between the Paris jazz of Django Reinhardt and the western swing of Bob Wills, we hook up with the Gypsy Wranglers and their new release **Step It Up And Go!** Weighing in with a mere five players, their sound is plenty full and they've chosen their material with obvious care. The title cut --the old Blind Boy Fuller tune-- is given a treatment here that straddles the territory of both Dixieland and Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, a longtime personal fave. "Valse de Niglos" is, as the title imparts, a waltz, though I don't pretend to know precisely what niglos are. This one's more reminiscent of the French street scene which seems to have faded a bit in recent years. Nevermind though, it's still quite alive in this ensemble.

The lineup is classic: Doug Tanner on fiddle, Craig Hollingsworth on accordion, Terry Reed on guitar (and great harmonica), Terry Nagel on trombone, and Lynn Lovell on standup bass. All the guys pitch in with the singing, but not Ms. Lovell. Her thumping bass sounds quite perfect in any event. As a certified "bonehead," I especially enjoy the trombone, which lends its distinct flavor throughout. The band offers up a fine rendition of such jazz classics as "Limehouse Blues," "Sheik Of Araby," and Benny Goodman's "Flying Home." When the latter was originally recorded by Goodman, it featured the novel electric guitar of Charlie Christian, a true pioneer. Not long thereafter, on the other side of the Big Pond, in France, a digitally impaired gypsy guitarist named Django Reinhardt was dazzling audiences with highly individual one string solos while accompanied by fiddler extraordinaire

Stéphane Grappelli. This disc takes a bit from both styles but emphasizes ensemble playing rather than long-winded soloing, although the "bone" is all over the place, giving a raucous feel to the mix. Another influence seems to be klezmer music which, in it's musical lineup and general feel, are similar. Other standouts here are Irving Berlin's poignant "Russian Lullaby," and Lonnie Carter/Little Walter's blues chestnut "Sitting On Top Of The World" (expect neither Howlin' Wolf nor Cream).

Not one note is out of place. These folks do it up right and make several styles their own. They jazz up a couple of "troubador" blues nicely, and put them in a countrified context, lively enough to dance to, but retaining the plaintive qualities the original artists had in mind.

(978.544.2067 or
413.367.2651 / www.tiac.net/users/treed/gypsywranglers)
- Meathook
Williams

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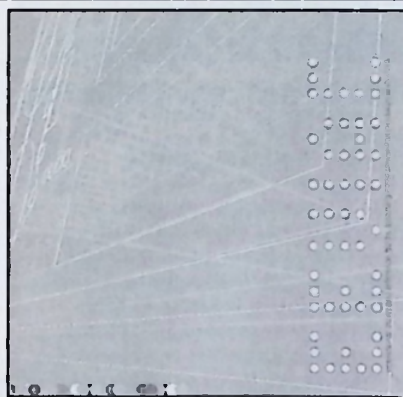
COLIN BASS AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS Kartini Music

Though he wears a dizzying array of hats, many readers will know Colin from his work with the progressive rock outfit Camel. And this is the Colin Bass we have here, busting out with this wonderful solo effort **An Outcast Of The Islands**. Though it has its doleful moments, **Outcast** is an uplifting work with superb playing from Bass and his all (except drummer Dave Stewart) Polish band. His voice is mellow and expressive, sort of like an infinitely more soulful version of Bryan Ferry. And nowhere is it more soulful than on "As Far As I Can See," with its richly layered tapestry of sounds.

The band is joined at several junctures by the Poznan Philharmonic Orchestra and Poznan Gospel Quintet, both expertly conducted by longtime friend Kim Burton. The overall feel is historical as in, say, early King Crimson. The epic "Goodbye To Albion" is an example of this formula at its very best. With its marvelous orchestral swells, soaring vocals, and Celtic flute, it's a beautiful musical synthesis of the old and the new. (The chorus just refuses to leave my head.) Gamelan percussion lends an Eastern ambience that meshes well with the sizzling guitar solos on "The Straits Of Malacca." "Denpaser Moon" is an anthemic work of subtle but powerful quality, and it's little wonder that it has been such a hit in that part of the world. "Burning Bridges" is another favorite, with its almost overwhelming, cavernous sound. "Reap What You Sew" features incandescent, rootsy slide guitar and gospel style piano and backing vocals... just gorgeous. Several string quartets provide classy segues between

the songs, often evoking a sadness that only they can induce, and further cementing the album as a continuous single work. Not many artists could arrange all these disparate parts, but with Burton's help here it's a resounding success. With great feeling and panache, **Outcast** recalls the golden age of progressive rock and its myriad combined elements.

(Kartini Records, Postfach
301429, 10722 Berlin, Germany)
- Meathook Williams



MAN OR ASTRO-MAN? EEVIAC Touch and Go

If you locked The Ventures in a padded room for 72 hours with nothing but 1950's science fiction movies, a chemistry set, some old DEVO records, an espresso machine, a paper hole puncher, a Mister Microphone, three extension cords, a piece of Spacelab, and a circa-1972 super computer, you probably would end up with Man or Astro-Man?—the strangest and most diverse record to date. **EEVIAC: Operational Index and Reference Guide, Including Other Modern Computation Devices**. Nobody knows a lot about the enigmatic Man or Astro-Man?. They claim to come from another galaxy, crash-landing in Alabamba in 1993. Even though their identities remain a secret, it is no mystery that they've been churning out a heady brew of energetic fun for years. **EEVIAC** is a nice mix of the familiar Astro-Man sound and some more experimental-industrial noodlings. It does not disappoint. If the TV show *My Three Sons* was set on the moon in the 22nd Century, Man or Astro-Man? would be playing at Chip's high school graduation party.

For more information, go here:
www.astroman.com.

- Dana Gentes



REVEREND HORTON HEAT HOLY ROLLER Sub Pop

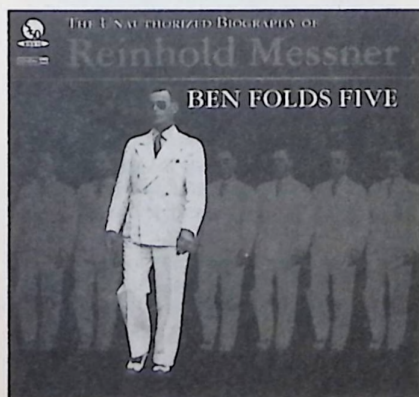
I can't stand "best of" collections, samplers, show-cases, any of that crap. Well, the Reverend, as always and in all ways, is an exception. **Holy Roller** includes tracks from all five of Reverend Horton's previous heat. 1990's **Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em** (Sub Pop). **The Full Custom Gospel Sounds of The Reverend Horton Heat** (1993, Sub Pop) produced by Gibby Haines, **Liquor in The Front** (1994, Interscope) co-produced with Al Jourgenson, **It's Martini Time** (1996, Interscope), and **Space Heater** (1997, Interscope); also included is a track from Sub Pop's **Afternoon Delight** compilation and two previously unreleased tracks, one of which is a wonderfully stripped down cover of "Folsom Prison Blues." There seems to be no reasoning behind the song placement on the disc. It would have fared better had it been structured chronologically, but when it comes to this particular band, perhaps reason is the wrong thing to expect. Besides, what the hell do I know that the Reverend doesn't?

What I did expect and what we definitely get here is twenty-four wildly rippin' tracks of manic, Texas insanity. If your idea of hard drinking, rocking cowboys includes a beat up Chevy Malibu, then this is the place to go. The music is unstoppable and is even better than my personal mix-tape of the same albums. This release is marketing brilliance on the part of Sub Pop and is, hopefully, a sign that there will be a new release in the near future. If you love the Reverend, then you'll get **Holy Roller**, and if this is your first taste, you will soon be drooling to buy the entire catalog of releases. Trust me; have I ever

steered you wrong? Right now I have an incredible urge to grease up my hair and head off into the desert at a hundred 'n twenty, with nothing but smokes and a bottle of cheap liquor for company. Yeah, I gots me some a that there ol' time religion. Drugs, drinking, fast driving, and hard living, down-on-your-luck desperadoes of the future are all coming our way with the Reverend and the boys.

The Reverend Horton Heat are Jim "Reverend Horton" Heath on guitar and vocals, Jimbo Wallace on bass, and Scott Churilla on drums. Patrick "Taz" Bentley was the Heat's drummer during the Sub Pop years, but nothing was lost in the transition, as this disc clearly shows. I must admit that I am somewhat partial to the first three albums, but that takes nothing away from the later stuff; besides, the studio recording process can do these hell-bent geniuses no true justice. To truly understand the Reverend Horton Heat experience, a live exhibition is in order, but this is an adequate introduction and the band makes regular stops in our Happy Valley, making it happier every time, I assure you. They are part tent show revival, part rockabilly disaster, and all too encompassing for my meager descriptive talents. There's nothing like them and there never will be. Just make sure you don't have to work for a couple of days after they roll into your life.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce



BEN FOLDS FIVE
THE UNAUTHORIZED
BIOGRAPHY OF
REINHOLD MESSNER
550 Music

If I had to choose one word to describe the new Ben Folds Five album, **The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner**, it would be "haunt-

ing." Good thing I have more than one word, because I'm going to elaborate.

If you've heard "Army," the first single off of Reinhold, then you probably think I'm off-base. "Army" isn't haunting!" you say. "It's a snappy and light pop song!" Which it is. But it's one of only two songs that fall into the "snappy" category. The other is "Your Redneck Past," which is dedicated to the fine art of hiding your roots. The rest of the album is heavy stuff — all led by Ben Folds' amazing piano work. Along with Robert Sledge and Darren Jesse, bass and drums respectively, the trio is able to create music I can only describe as simply beautiful.

The song "Magic" is particularly perfect. Folds sings mournfully, with soft piano solos in between violins, a cello, and pounding drums. "Mess" is another haunting song, with celestial tones and more amazing instrumentals.

With the exception of "Magic," Folds wrote all the lyrics, and they read like a poem. This disc is more grown up than their previous releases, both lyrically and musically. I have absolutely no complaints with **The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner**. The talents of the men from Ben Folds Five combine to make this their best album yet.

- Aundria Theocles



FRANK ZAPPA
SON OF
CHEEP
THRILLS
Rykodisc

This is the second Zappa compilation that Rykodisc has tried to pawn off on the unsuspecting public. It has eleven great tracks, including four live ones, but the songs just don't work together. It includes some of the really awesome musicians that ol' Franky

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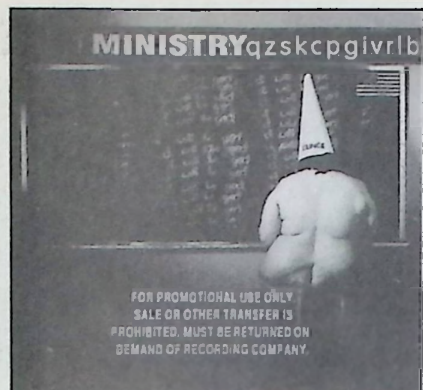
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worked with over the years, people like Adrian Belew, Terry Bozzio, Vinnie Colaiuta, George Duke, Tommy Mars, Ian Underwood, Steve Vai, Peter Wolf and about a million more. What doesn't work here is that there is none of that album magic that Zappa's deviant genius brought to his music. He had a concept for his releases and they were painstakingly crafted by whatever warped methodology he employed. The live stuff suffers because all of the surrounding energy is gone. This disc simply doesn't allow the listener to slide under that slimy rock of mayhem and brilliance that was Frank Zappa. I guess the idea behind the release is to allow first-time Zappa listeners into his world on a normal length CD and give them an idea of the spectrum he created in. Bad Idea. "WPLJ," "Ya Hozna," "Disco Boy," "Sinister Footwear" and the other great tunes are strangely disappointing when out of context. Go buy the real albums and Rykodisc is the place to get them. You can reach them at rykodisc.com or just shop your local independent music store.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS CALIFORNICATION MINISTRY DARK SIDE OF THE SPOON WB

Magic is a funny thing. Hard to actually define in words, but easily identifiable when it's happening — magic is a potent force. Times can be magical, and sometimes music is irrevocably chained to that time. The Chili Peppers and Ministry captured the feel of alternative rock in the early 90's, daring and cutting edge, part of a magical time for rock. But like my friend Al always said: "Timing

is everything." And seven years later, both bands are slightly battered, in need of a strong release. The question is: Can you really ever go back home?

The Chili Peppers have been creatively hamstrung for a while now, never really recovering from the departure of guitarist John Frusciante. They've been through at least four guitarists since the wizard of **Bloodsugarsexmagic** and **Mothers Milk** quit in summer 1992 on the eve of world domination. A semi-successful collaboration with Dave Navarro in 1994 (**One Hot Minute**) kept them in the limelight, but they've been scarce of late. A rumored reunion with Frusciante got people's ears perking up, tho'.

The results are a tad underwhelming. When reviewers start brandishing words like "mature" and "well-crafted," I start getting nervous. Instead of breaking new ground, **Californication** sounds like a pastiche of unrelated bits of older stuff, like someone cut **BSSMagic** into little pieces, threw it up in the air, and reassembled them in random order. Many songs start strong, then disintegrate quickly. Opener "Around the World" starts in a flurry of bass and feedback, building nicely, then immediately drops into an unrelated and energy sapping diversion. "Parallel Universe" reworks Kiss' "I Was Made For Lovin' You" as a cool Primused prog-rock romp.

Otherwise there is very little new here, and the few new bits are mostly ill-advised. Do we really still need to hear Anthony Kiedis prattle on about his sex life? Hearing Ant sing about his sexploits in 1999 is like Tracy Lords doing a nude scene in her next flick.

This record really needed to come out five years ago for there to be any kind of continuity or relevance. Relevance to what, though? A juvenile Peter-Pan-on-Viagra trip that was so naughty in 1991 but is just limp today? In the eight years since **BSSMagic**, it's possible that most of their fans have grown up, leaving it all behind.

A major disappointment is John Frusciante. Playing more like a timid

apprentice than the ax-monster that shredded **Mother's Milk** and **BSSMagic**, Frusciante remains very much in the background. The lone barn burner occurs during the unfortunately titled "Purple Stain," a peppy paen to sex during menstruation. Overall not terrible, but not the comeback that everyone had hoped for. Faint echoes of a faraway time. Sad.

Ministry, however, are not laboring under any misconceptions or delusions about where they are at. Following the success of the stunning **Psalm 69** (1992), widespread recognition and the big time beckoned. A series of high profile arrests, heroin busts, and band dissent derailed their momentum and dissipated the groundswell. The disastrous **Filth Pig** (1995) scattered the few remaining faithful to the wind. News of an aborted and discarded follow-up recording didn't bode well for the future.

Dark Side of the Spoon is definitely a return to form for Messrs. Jourgenson and Barker. "Supermaniac Soul" opens and is immediately identifiable — a satisfying **Psalm 69** feel. "Eureka Pile" is slower, showing signs of a slight Butthole Surfers influence. This is more evident on "Step," which redoes the Butthole's "Going Down to Florida" nicely. It is also one of the most forthcoming apologies heard on record lately:

"I need help... help me... I don't even know who I am anymore... I'd like to apologize to all my wonderful fans for sticking by me through such troubled times... I love you all so much... If I could I'd take every one of you with me and put you right underneath my pillow..." all delivered in a twisted and tongue in cheek Butthole-tone. They show a cleverness in self-deprecation that contrasts with the Chili Peppers' self-absorption. Early 90's attitudes are not going to cut it in the 21st century.

"Nursing Home" captures some of the early Stooges and MC5's flirtations with jazz — horns caterwauling through a heavy thunder. The record finishes with a snappy instrumental workout "10/10" and closes out a decent return to form. One thing in this record's favor is that at 43 minutes, it is proper album length. Something that seems to have escaped artists is the concept "less is more." The automatic inclusion of all the b-sides and outtakes to pad CD's out to 70 minutes doesn't always benefit the artist. **BSSMagic**, Soundgarden's **Superunknown** and Guns n' Roses bloated **Use Your Illusion** all are good examples of records that would have

Cool Summer?

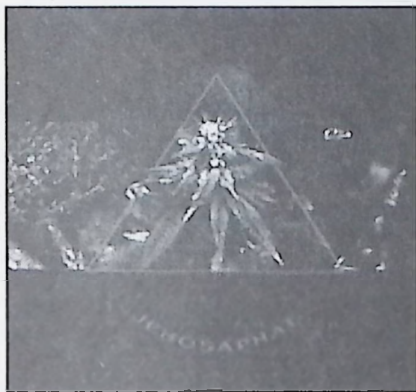
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reviews

been much more powerful if trimmed to the 45 minute length.

Less ferocious but at least it's fun again. Oh, don't forget to look for the hidden track, a twisted a capella disturbance buried deep (song 69, actually). Despite the litany of complaints above, you still could do a lot worse these days. "Don't ask me 'bout the shape I'm in, I can't sing I ain't pretty and my legs are thin; don't ask me what I think of you, I might not give the answer that you want me to...oh, well..."

- Carwreck deBangs



AUGUSTUS PABLO VALLEY OF JEHOSAPHAT Ras

From time to time, an artist creates a niche for himself which, though within conventional realms, is totally unique. Augustus Pablo was certainly one of these. A "there at the inception" pioneer of Jamaican dub music, Pablo's ax was the rarely played melodica, a lung-powered miniature keyboard. His artistry was both visionary and prolific, lasting right up to his unfortunate demise last month from the debilitating nervous disorder *Miasthenia Gravis*. Making this event sadder yet, is the release of his final album *Valley Of Jehosaphat*, certainly as good a disc as he ever recorded. As modern as it is rootsy, the recording combines simple rhythms and melodies in his usual charming manner. Never one for over-icing the cake, he keeps the instrumentation traditional. There's no sound here that couldn't have been made when he hit the scene more than twenty-five years ago. This, to me, is a perfect example of an artist remaining true to his craft.

Though the production is markedly improved and the tunes all fresh (although there are some older rhythm tracks that are built upon here), Pablo's sound is basically unchanged. If his signature song, the mega-hit, "King

Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown," was a cleaner recording, it would certainly not sound out of place here. Along with King Tubby, Lee Perry, and only a couple of others, he defined this music. From the loping opener "Kushites" (and its dub version which follows — a "dub of a dub," so to speak), the apocryphally titled climax, "Lymphatic Time," the music's more meditative than it is dance fare (though you could well skank about the dancefloor throughout). The title cut is vintage Pablo, visceral and brooding, but "Jah Express" is one of those rare cuts without melodica (Pablo also plays other keyboards occasionally), the featured instrument being a twangy guitar played by reggae great Earl "Chinna" Smith (evoking jazz guitarist Al Caiola on his *Magnificent Seven* album).

These recordings were made at the legendary Tuff Gong studios and are thus as good as could be possible, making this a superb swan song for one of the most important and memorable musicians to ever have graced the international scene.

(Ras Records, POB 42517,
Washington D.C. 20015, (301) 588-9641,
www.rasrecords.com)

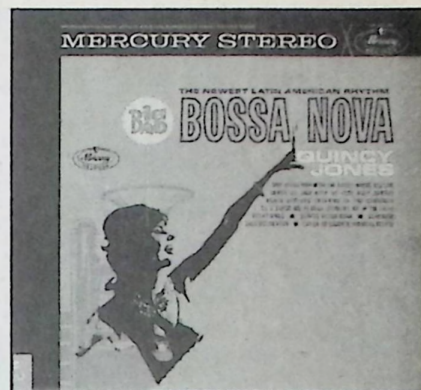
- Meathook Williams

DEPECHE MODE THE SINGLES 81-85 Mute/Reprise

Umm, I'm not sure where to start on this one. Replaying stuff like this is like being reminded of bad parts of your life that you have worked hard to forget. Initial listenings reveal that Depeche Mode was indistinguishable from all of the early 80's Brit-electro pop that assaulted our shores until the mid-80's. Spandau Ballet, Soft Cell, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Human League — this could be any of those interchangeable funsters. Tweak and brittle, but retaining a certain catchiness and innocence that hasn't quite disappeared in the last 15 years. "Just Can't Get Enough" and "People Are People" are guilty pleasures, a sort of aural sado-masochism, or as Throbbing Gristle put it, "entertainment through pain." Not pain in the industrial cacophony sense, but — oh good lord, "See You" just came out of my stereo — this song made me want to hurt innocent animals (read: pasty brit synth poppers) at the time.

Ok, so maybe this stuff hasn't aged so well, and actually made bands like Asia sound innovative by comparison. And that is quite an achievement.

- Carwreck deBangs



QUINCY JONES & ORCHESTRA BIG BAND BOSSA NOVA Verve/Polygram

Just as Herbie Hancock's soundtrack to the film *Blow Up* is now forever remembered for the song "Bring Down The Birds" and the use of its groovy bassline in Dee-Lite's classic "Groove Is In The Heart," this record will be known as the source of "Soul Bossa Nova." This song is currently being associated with *Austin Powers*, and can be found in the beginning of both films. It has, however, been sampled many times over -- often to great effect. It was the theme music for the 1998 World Cup, the backbone of the Dream Warriors' breakout hit, "My Definition (of a Boombastic Jazz Style)" and the theme song to a popular TV game show. It's also unlike anything else on the record.

Oh, there's one or two songs that sound kind of like it, particularly on the cover of "On The Street Where You Live." Realistically, though, "Soul Bossa Nova" seems to be in its own world. This may be due in part to the inclusion of Roland Kirk and his funky flute playing. His playing provides the personality of the piece. It's also the only song on the album that he sat in on, so maybe Roland is the key. There are, however, a number of other great players on this session.

Lalo Shifrin, who would later be known for his heavy scores to 70's epic disaster and shoot-em-up cop flicks, sits in on piano and contributes one track, "Lalo Bossa Nova." The great saxophonist Paul Gonsalves is on a number of tracks, including the bossa nova version of Charles Mingus' "Boogie Stop Shuffle." There's also Clark Terry, Jim Hall and Phil Woods. A great ensemble indeed.

- Phil Straub

music

URRGGH...!

BLACK METAL VIKING ATTACK!



Once upon a time, there was a little label in England called Neat Records. In 1981, they released the debut LP from Venom. **Welcome to Hell** was a collage of blazingly fast riffs (for the time), played so fast the guitar, bass and drums seemed to be neck in neck in a race to some receding finish line. Cacophonous but original, Venom cloaked themselves in trappings of blasphemy and devil worship and went forth. A trio of working class Brits, they hid under the pseudonyms Abaddon, Mantas and Cronos — terrible musicians but able to create an overall effect. Their follow-up, **Black Metal** (1982) was heavier and faster, and formed a foundation as well as supplied a genre name for a huge current subculture that gets virtually no attention from any press outside the hardcore metal 'zines.

What Venom unleashed is still expanding today. Both Metallica and Slayer are direct descendants, starting with a ton of Venom in their sets. But the truly interesting seeds were planted in Norway and the rest of Scandinavia. Bands like Entombed and Unleashed bridged the gap to the early 90's, and then strange things started to happen. British magazine *Kerrang* did a couple of spotlight articles (and a cover) on a group of Christian-hating, born again pagan, church-burning metal bands in Norway. "Hm" I thought, "this is something new." Thousand year old churches were going up like marshmallows at a weenie roast, and Viking metal heads were openly claiming credit. This was everything your parents warned you would happen if you listened to Ozzy. Holy Shit!

Centered around a Norwegian record store owned by Euronymous, (a truly spooky dude who also fronted the

'92-'94, dragging kids into their circle like a cult. Count Grishnakh founded the rival band Burzum, and developed a jr. high style rivalry with Euronymous. More church burnings showed up in *Kerrang*, but otherwise no one outside Norway noticed.

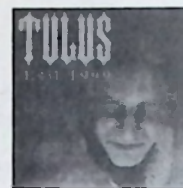
But it was Euronymous' murder by Count Grishnakh that got people's attention. An unrepentant Grishnakh at first denied, then was arrested for the grisly knifing. Murder in Norway carries a maximum sentence of only fourteen years, so the Count was looking at release in his mid 30's. He continued to issue statements from prison and generally set the country to worrying. More churches burned, and a subsequent murder of an innocent homosexual by a member of yet another Norwegian black metal band went almost unnoticed. A British band reported being attacked on their tour bus by a group of adolescents, disciples of Euronymous, for not being true metal (i.e. not Black Metal). What was going on here?

Though the madness seems to be confined to Norway, the scene certainly is not. Venom has spawned children worldwide, and Black Metal bands abound. Most bands sound fairly identical to the beginner, and all you can look for is a little bit of character to distinguish one from the other. Some bands are tedious, exercises in breakneck drumming while everyone tries to catch up — more calisthenics than rock n' roll. Much of it is like an extended multi cavity session at the dentist: smoke, pounding, drill breaks, screaming, blood and a fucking headache. Some go for this though, and below is a sampler of the latest sproutings from Viking-land.

My housemate (CS) joined for some of these comments.

band Mayhem — their original singer named Dead rubbed dis-interred animal carcasses on himself before shows; he later disappeared without a trace — whispers that his bones are in the metal scene are unconfirmed but generally accepted as true), the Norwegian scene expanded from

TULUS EVIL 1999 Hammerheart



Norwegian Black Metalers, formerly Old Man's Child. Post-Venom but hints of classical and early Rush among Slayer riffs. Tortured (but not pitch bent)

vocals. Not bad.
CS: *Death metal on a Wednesday afternoon?*
Production - ok
Guitar - good
Drums - weak
Sample song titles - "Menneskefar," "Darskap Til Visdom"
Sample band members - none listed

TRELLDOM TIL ET ANNET Hammerheart

CS: *This is the new Tree? Treldom? This album sucks! If the guy singing would shut the fuck up...*
Slight Stone Temple Pilots meets thrash metal. In their own words: "No wimpy keyboard shit." Features Gaahl, vocalist of Gorgoroth (isn't that a line from *Ghostbusters?*). Swings a little bit, which is rare for Black Metal. Almost approaches real singing for a sec.
CS: *Why tease us like that? I still think they suck, but this isn't bad...*
Production - good
Guitar - weak
Drums - good
Sample song titles - "Vender Meg Mot Ett Kommende," "Sowar Dreyri"
Sample band members - *Ghostbusters* guy

KAMPFAR FRA UNDERVERDENEN Hammerheart

An offshoot of Mock. Notes proclaim tons of folk influences, but they consist of 30 second unrelated intros to the usual mayhem. Sort of an updated Yngwie Malmsteen, but quick shifts into overdrive...
CS: *I don't like that voice — twisted hardcore.*
Didgeridoo in death metal?
Production - good
Guitar - excellent
Drums - good
Sample song titles - "Svart Og Vondt," "Mork Pest"
Sample band member - Dolk

NOCTES VEXILLA REGIS PRODEUNT INFERNI No Fashion

Able to create weird tornado effects not evident in other bands.

CS: This is video game soundtrack material... I feel like I should be playing *Zelda*.

More like a rollercoaster ride than others — they are on the right track. A cool acoustic variant — slight

Celtic/Swede folk swing to some tunes.

Production - so-so

Guitar - good

Drums - ok

Sample song titles - "Carnifex," "Frozen to Sleep"

Sample band members - Holger, Pasi, Johann

INSANIA WORLD OF ICE No Fashion

Opens with a solo keyboard piece straight from bad 80's Rick Wakeman solo albums. Band quote: "Building on the heritage of Helloween and Blind Guardian." Powerslave Iron Maiden meets Mindcrime Queensryche. Top notch musicianship but about 15 years too late. Listenable in a retro way.

CS: Cheesy 80's metal!

Production - excellent

Guitar - good

Drums - excellent

Sample song titles - "Fighting My Tears," "Insanation"

Sample band members - Mikko Korsback, Patrik Vastilla

LORD BELIAL UNHOLY CRUSADE No Fashion

Cool clanking noises in the background of the opener — first scary one yet.

Marred by Grim Reaper style front

cover. Good Black Metal should sound like a front end about to throw a tie-rod at 75 mph; this does. Some "important" sounding chords.

CS: Sounds like the guy from the beginning of *Tales From the Crypt* singing...

Production - so-so

Guitar - ok

Drums - ok

Sample song titles - "Lord of Evil Spirits," "Divide et Impera"

Sample band members - Dark, Bloodlord, Sin, Vassago

LOBOTOMY BORN IN HELL No Fashion



Very Sepulchry... grabs you right away.

CS: Maybe it's because they're playing rock n' roll?

More American than the others, but

Swedish. Old style metal c. 1988 — Exodus, Anthrax, Pantera type thrash updated a bit. Powerful, but rocking — not an over-the-top assault.

Production - excellent

Guitar - good

Drums - excellent

Sample song titles - "Dead," "Fistful of Demons," "Bed of Flies"

Sample band members - all French/Swedish guys w/o funny Satanic aliases

- CARWRECK deBANGS



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The author hard at work researching this article.

OZZFEST

The Tweeter Center
June 16

Let me tell you just how cool I am. Reviewer tickets to see Ozzy, plus a special photo-journalist pass to get up in front of the barrier and snap some shots. Cookie and I pull up and ask to be directed, "Where do we get our press passes?", I ask with as much false importance as can be managed. "Straight up and to the left, Sir," she responded. Sir. Sir? Yeah, cool, like I said. I'm decked in my reporter clothes; slacks, shoes, button-down shirt, even colored socks. Cookie looks her usual lovely self. We get the tickets and we enter the carnival of money that is Ozzfest. There are booths to win stuff and food stands; no real rides, but it's close, you know? Primus is Primus, no more no less. Fear Factory is pretty OK. Rob Zombie is a poor caricature of his old self, but gets the crowd going with a chant of OZZY... OZZY. That's fun and I jot down some stuff in my little notebook.

Rob's set ends and Cookie and I grab some burgers. She's in a huff. The tickets were under *Duke plus one* and this is a little too much to bear. We work through it and go find our seats. The stage is set up like all big rock-n-roll shows are. A Black Sabbath retrospective plays on the multiple screens and out comes the band. This is what I've been waiting for. I still remember spending most of grade school and junior high with O-Z-Z-Y written across the knuckles of my left hand. I should be excited. I should have my fist in the air. I should be screaming my head off. Something is seriously wrong. I'm detached, a spectator, a journalist. The band comes out and we make our way down to the front. I show the pass on my shirt to the left and to the right and get up to the barrier. Geezer Butler is a scant few feet away and I break out the camera. The head guard comes up and tells me photos for the first three songs only and I nod my head. I start snapping shots.

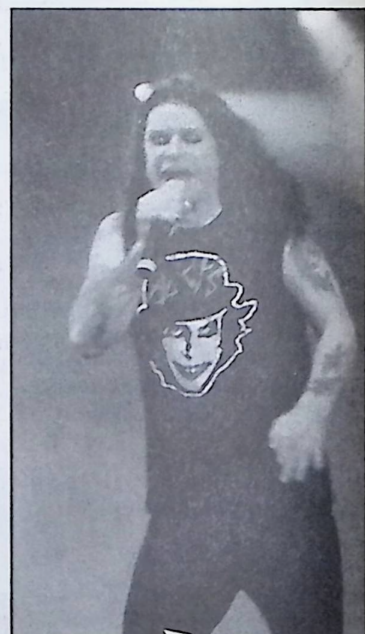
They open with "War Pigs." The crowd erupts, but I'm still separate, still special. I finish the roll and Cookie loads a new one in (I am technically inept and unable to live in modern society without help). I start shooting again. I turn and people give

me devil signs, grinning and screaming. I'm the king, baby. All of a sudden as if appearing from the Christian Coalition's worst nightmare is The Beast. THE BEAST. He's at least eight feet tall. Hair down to his ass. Covered in tattoos. "That's enough pictures," booms his voice. I show him my pass and as he looms over me, he says, "It doesn't say Black Sabbath." He grabs for the camera and we struggle. He wins, rips out the film, rips my special pass off my chest and rips it into pieces. I watch, crestfallen and dumbfounded as he storms away.

I go up to the head guard guy and start complaining. He says that there is nothing any one can do. He tells me that if Ozzy were God, then that guy would be the Pope. I step back and think to myself, "What does he mean, if Ozzy were God?" I just got jacked up by the Pope of Metal. The Pope of Rock. Suddenly I feel released. The self-importance is gone. I'm one with my brethren. One with the crowd. Cookie and I find our seats and scream and yell and flash fist and devil sign. I am myself and Black Sabbath rocks. They play it all. This is no paltry Dio version. This is it and I succumb to my true self. Ozzfest is dissolved and there is only Sabbath. Gone is the

crass commercialism. Gone are the five dollar burgers. The fifty dollar sweatshirts (although I did get a t-shirt). There is nothing left but Bill Ward, Geezer Butler, Tony Iommi, and Ozzy. They rip through an extended set made up of the first four albums and I go hoarse from yelling. The crowd is maniacal and Ozzy is in prime condition. The thousands of us pound on the seats. Ozzy leaps wildly about the stage. Iommi wails on his now classic SG. The world is good and pure and rock still lives.

- text+photos: Duke Aaron
Il Duce



WARPED TOUR

OUTDOOR BARBECUE AT KIDDIEPALOOZA

Hot... very hot... traffic... miles from Worcester backed up over hill. Ten miles, stop and go, ten more miles... stop... traffic getting off 91 won't move... missing bands... over-heating already... no clouds... no trees... temp at 100... many bands... many people... heat rises in thick waves... water more important than music... survival in question? Many bands sound similar this year... loud... dazed faces in a catatonia of indifference... sun ever this large?... red faces... firehoses... fun in a s&m kind of way... pleasure through self-deprivation and light torture... very similar to last year... no Rev... hot... temp won't stop increasing... must leave... dust ... hot... help... see ya next year?

- Alec
Drouillet

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Sally Taylor

VMag caught up with Sally Taylor in June in Northampton. Sally, the 25 year-old daughter of James Taylor and Carly Simon, was on a national tour to support her debut album, *Tomboy Bride*. We chatted about growing up, shuttling between Mom and Pop, New York City and Martha's Vineyard, the education she received in the home and around the world.

Kyle Cohen: What was it like to grow up in such a creative family?

Sally Taylor: Amazing! I have nothing to compare it to because I only had one childhood, but it was amazing to see them work and to be constantly around music. (Starts singing) "Eggs and toast and orange juice, eggs and toast and orange juice, eat them up, right a-way!" That was how we woke up. It was cool.

K: Who were your influences, other than your parents?

S: I listened to all those teeny bopper things, like Duran Duran and all those people. I loved the Rolling Stones, and I loved a lot of funk growing up, too. There were a couple of songs that were sort of just staples, like "Lime In The Coconut," Cat Stevens. Those were all staples for us.

K: How do you feel about the inevitable com-

parisons to your parents? Are you sick of it?

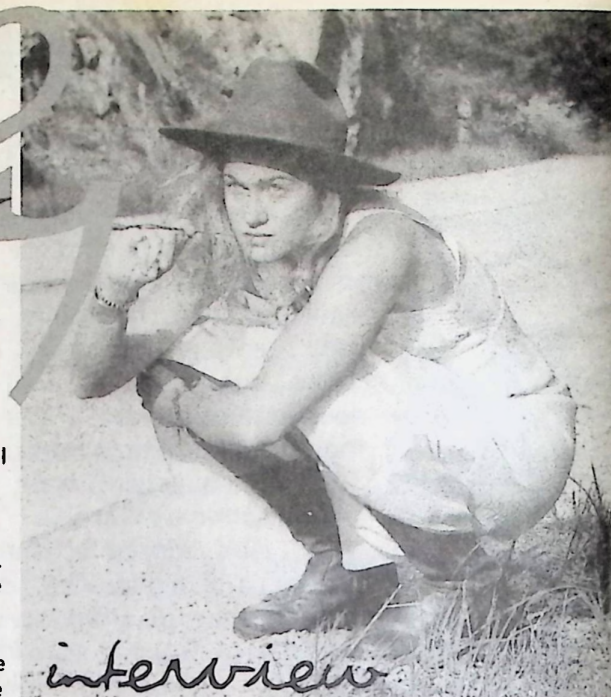
S: No. I'm not sick of it. I mean, it's what makes people come out - how can I be sick of that? To have an audience is really important to the way we perform. People are gonna be curious, so they're gonna come out and want to hear how we sound alike, just like how you go up to somebody's sister you knew and say, "You look so familiar!" We wanna do that, we want to be safe inside something familiar. So that they feel familiar with us and curious enough to come out, that's really important. If I was self-conscious about what I was doing, or I didn't like what I was doing, then yeah, I'd probably feel bad about the comparisons or the judgments. But I love what I'm doing, regardless of how they feel about me!

K: When you decided to drop out of school and go into music, were your parents...

S: Oh no. I finished school. I took a couple of years off. I'm actually waiting for my diploma in the mail. I didn't drop out. I majored in medical anthropology, and finished up my degree in Colorado, and transferred my credits back [to Brown University]. (My parents) have been nothing but supportive.

K: Do you ever worry about making a living in music, or can you continue to play your music, control your own music, and just have fun with it rather than be at the beck and call of some label?

S: That's a good question, but that's what we're trying to do. We make enough to get by, but we also do a lot of work, because we can't hire a manager. We do a lot of work. I won't do anything to compromise my happiness, so at this point this is the way it's got to be. And I'm so grateful for that. I wouldn't be happy if I were tied to a



record label right now, so I'd be compromising that happiness to be on a label.

K: What's the story behind Donald Fagen being on one of the tracks?

S: After I finished about fifteen of the tracks, a friend of mine said why don't you take some pictures, and go get a couple CD's made up? So I did, and I sent it to my mom, you know, "Look what I've been doing for the past month!" And she was so impressed, and she sent it to Donald. So he called me up and said, "I want to produce a track." And I said, "Oh no, you don't have to!" I thought he was just doing it out of obligation or something, but he was like, "No, I WANT to." And I said, "No, it's all right," and I hung up the phone and thought, "What did I just do?" So I called him back and I said, "I don't know what I just said to you, but I'll be on the next plane to New York City." And I did that, and I hovered in a corner while he and Walter [Becker] took my music and did beautiful things to it.

K: What's your favorite James Taylor song?

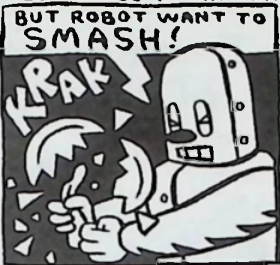
S: My favorite one? I don't think I have a favorite one; they're all so good. I like "Sarah Maria," cause it's about me.

K: Your favorite Carly song?

S: Probably "Anticipation." I love that song. I love it all, really. Because it came out of them. It's all beautiful to me.



Sally Taylor's *Tomboy Bride* is almost all-Sally. She wrote all the tracks solo and self-produced the disc. Mostly folk-rock, although a couple of the tunes have a distinctive jazzy flavor. Check out Sally's homepage at www.sallytaylor.com for her lively road journal and to order *Tomboy Bride*.



MAGIC BOY

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JAMES KOCHALKA

JUNE 6, 1999

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Leold knows:

The opposite of hope is despair.

The opposite of familiarity is estrangement.

The opposite of peace is conflict.

The opposite of love is...

"Don't you still owe me \$153 for the phone bill?"



do you make your neighborhood look like shit because you only take care of YOUR lawn every other month ?!

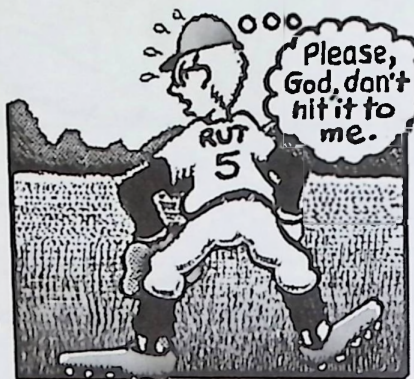
up yours.



Upyrbuddh@aol.com



I was never much
of a ballplayer.



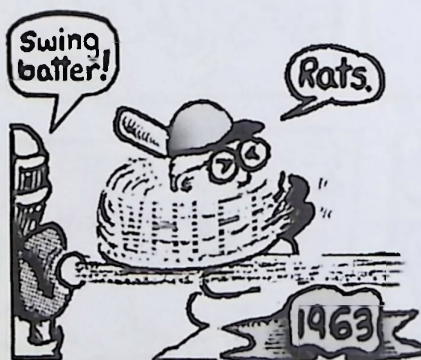
I prided myself
on getting one
hit a year.



A hit a year may not
sound like much but
I was grateful.



One year I went
down to my last
at bat, hitless.



Not much was at
stake except my pride.



It was the bottom
of the 9th, 2 out,
23-6, their favor.



That's when every-
one on the other
team sat down.



The pitcher lobbed
a sucker pitch.



I connected! The ball whistled past the shortstop's ear.



The left-fielder froze where he sat!



I put my head down and ran.



The left-fielder put up his arm and caught my hit, sitting down!



Cheering wildly, his team-mates carried him on their shoulders.



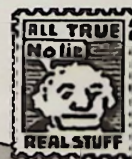
I was steaming into second base.



That's the way we finished: 1-12.



Later, after my team had gone, I wept.



13 1/2

LEER

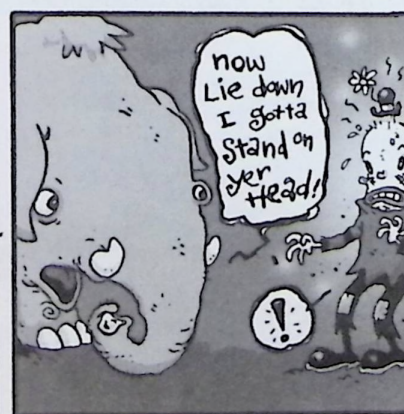
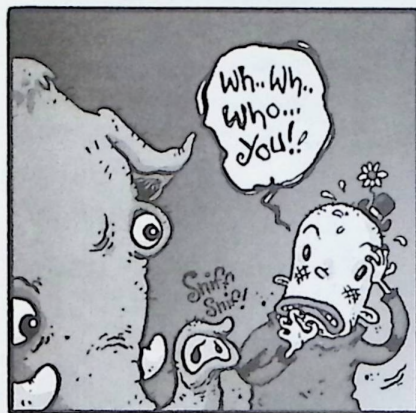
BABE RUT
16 Acres - Left Out

SLAV

.085

COMPLETE LITTLE LEAGUE BATTING RECORD

| Year | Club | Pos | G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | BB | SO | SLAV | 085 |
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| 1956 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1957 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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| 1959 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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| 1966 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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| 2019 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2020 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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| 2023 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
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| 2072 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2073 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2074 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2075 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2076 | 1st McGuffey | 100 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |



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ARTIST/TITLE

The Lowdown

Well, should I buy it?

If it was food:
average
refrigerator
shelf life.

BUCKCHERRY
BUCKCHERRY
Dreamworks



Despite a blatant reworking of Ace Frehley's "Shock Me," "Lit Up" is one gut bucket rocker. If Axl Rose and Slash had intro'd a reunion with this one, Guns n' Roses'd be filling stadiums this summer.

How can you hate a song with the chorus: "I love the cocaine, I love the cocaine..."? It's getting hard to shock teachers and parents, but this oughta do it.

Cole slaw
(two days).

THE BLACK CROWES
BY YOUR SIDE
Columbia



Cleaned-up and hipper (not hippie) image. Tighter songs and good results. Back to some **America** energy. Another killer Humble Pie record draws breath.

If the Crowes had written the Buckcherry song, they would be filling stadiums this summer.

Ketchup
(six months).

SLAUGHTER
BACK TO REALITY
CMC



Could be Crue, Poison, White Lion, Skid Row, etc.... You'd never get it without a couple guesses. Jeff Blando is slight improvement over deceased Tim Kelly. Still, this record has already come out in '86, '88, '91, '93, '95 and '97.

At least it's heavy.
Not sure about the relevance of the album title or the pseudo-Dali artwork, tho'.


DEF LEPPARD
EUPHORIA
Mercury



Scary-looking bunch trying to out-cool _____ (fill-in the blank with whoever you think looks really cool). Sounds a little like **Hysteria** but, ummm, wasn't that eleven years ago? Some of this sounds a little like Trevor Rabin-era Yes, some like bad Lenny Kravitz. At least Joe Elliot has finally learned how to sing.

Like **Pyromania** and **Hysteria**, this one too ends in 'ia.' You make the call. To quote: "I'm back in your face like I've never been away/I'm back like runaway Mack, like Union Jack..." uh-oh. Dio's Viv Campbell draws a paycheck but remains unnoticeable. Might sound good on the beach, if anyone plays it on the radio...

Chinese food leftovers
(one day).

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| STEREOLAB ALUMINUM TUNES <i>Switched On, Vol. 3</i> Drag City |  | <p>Another enjoyable collection of outtakes and rare b-sides that along with Volume 2 could form a decent Stereolab collection in itself. Stuff from 1994-1997, lounge-influenced, hypnotic, cool. Earlier stuff better than later; hopefully not evidence of a slide.</p> | <p>A double-CD is probably too much but you gotta keep the completists happy. Some of their braver stuff is here. Good fun; recommended.</p> | <p>Your grandmother's rum-laced fruitcake (one year).</p> |
| KING CRIMSON CIRKUS Virgin |  | <p>Two-CD set with 15 unreleased performances covering '69 Greg Lake stuff (already available on Epitaph) to unreleased Boz Burrell-era "Schizoid Man" to Belew-era unreleased '84 meltdowns to frosty '96 sextet workout. Despite much reissue material, and varying sources over 27 years, it hangs together pretty well. As good a place as any to begin unraveling the Crimson mysteries.</p> | <p>Even if you already have Absent Lovers, B'Boom, Epitaph, The Night Watch, and The Great Deceiver? Yes. Also contains a Projekt Two unreleased jam from the '98 Pearl Street show!</p> | <p>Bottle of Moët et Chandon you forgot about in the back of the 'frige (three years).</p> |
| HUNTINGTONS FILE UNDER RAMONES Tooth and Nail |  | <p>Ramones sound-alikes finally drop pretenses of originality and embrace their muses with enthusiasm. A whole CD of Ramones covers sound like fun? The Huntingtons have an earnestness that almost pulls this off.</p> | <p>The Ramones ain't making any noise these days, so it's not really a surprise that this has happened. Not as tight as the Ramones, but has that infectiousness that propelled the originals -- fun. Cool parody of Warner Archive packaging, too.</p> | <p>Two-liter bottle of Cherry Coke (one week).</p> |
| PAVEMENT TERROR TWILIGHT Matador |  | <p>Like Guided By Voices, Pavement was one of the crown princes of true indie rock in the early '90s. Today brings a holding pattern and a fairly safe album. Pleasant and unassuming, neither a step forward nor a step back, but a slip sideways. Like Pink Floyd doing Palace Brothers, this is a sparkling recording, but great sound doesn't always play to the strengths of a lo-fi band.</p> | <p>If you like going to the Bay State, you probably should get this just for the hell of it. Not a disappointment, but not earthshaking. A little too heavy on the Americana...</p> | <p>Mushrooms (one month).</p> |
| ROKY ERICKSON NEVER SAY GOODBYE Emperor Jones |  | <p>The US Syd Barrett's lost years finally documented. '71-'74 recordings (with a couple '85 songs) from the period of his institutional incarceration. Fragile acoustic guitar underpins a more fragile psyche dissolving while the tape rolls. Before the vampires, demons and creatures with atom brains came a callin'. Like watching a friend cry -- uncomfortable yet fascinating.</p> | <p>Very lo-fi home recordings. You gotta be more than just a casual dabbler in Roky's stuff. Fans of solo Charles Manson stuff will grok this stuff too. (Not the answer 13th Floor Elevators have been seeking, but a unique view of a mind in dissolution.)</p> | <p>Something unidentified way in the back of the 'frige that you're afraid to throw out because it might be "important" (over one year).</p> |

Wide View

All reviews by
S.R. Bissette

New on video
AUGUST

WACO: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Sober, scathing, and ultimately terrifying documentary chronicles the tragedy at Waco, and is required viewing. You don't have to be a survivalist or conspiracy nut to acknowledge the terrible human toll of gung-ho government agencies out of control. This had only one area showing at the Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT; don't pass it up on home video. Recommended.

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE

Joseph Fiennes, Gwyneth Paltrow, Geoffrey Rush, Colin Firth, Ben Affleck.

1998 Academy Award sweeper (including Best Picture) breezes into home video in time for summer's end. Literate romantic comedy about Shakespeare (Fiennes) struggling with overdue bills, overdue scripts, and a crisis of the heart culminates in a bracing premiere of "Romeo and Juliet" and brims over with wit, heart, and romance. Irresistible and lavish entertainment, further bejeweled with Judi Dench's Oscar-winning turn as Queen Elizabeth. Highly recommended.

THE GENERAL

Don't miss this one! Director John Boorman (POINT BLANK, DELIVERANCE, EXCALIBUR) carves a riveting portrait of Irish crime lord and folk hero scoundrel Martin Cahill (who, by the way, once plundered Boorman's flat and stole his gold record award for the DELIVERANCE soundtrack, a moment slyly captured here). Brendan Gleeson breathes life into Cahill, and Jon Voight delivers another fine character turn as the Dublin police chief determined to bring Cahill down. One caveat: the theatrical original was in sterling black and white; the video release has been colorized, damn it. Turn off the color on your set when you pop it in, or check it out on DVD, where it remains in its b&w glory. One of the best of 1999, hands down.

CELEBRITY

Woody Allen's latest stars Kenneth Branagh as Allen's surrogate at the center of post-Warhol era celebrity frenzies in the Big Apple. As ever, great cast — Judy Davis, Melanie Griffith, Winona Ryder, Joe Montegna, etc. — but greasy-haired brat Leonardo DiCaprio steals the show blazing his underbelly as an arrogant young rocker lapping up (and snorting) all that money can buy (it's as close as we'll ever get to what his turn as Ellis' AMERICAN PSYCHO might have been).

TALE OF THE MUMMY

Aussie director Russell Mulcahy (HIGHLANDER, THE SHADOW, and many music videos) brings a stylish twist or two to the Mummy mythos in this direct-to-video feature that was swept under the carpet by Universal's THE MUMMY boxoffice bonanza. Worth a look, sporting a heftier dose of horror than the recent theatrical hit, compliments of FX by KNB (EVIL DEAD 2, FROM DUSK TO DAWN). With attractive headliners Jason Scott Lee and Louise Lombard; character turns by Christopher Lee (Hammer's DRACULA), Honor Blackman (GOLDFINGER' Pussy Galore), and Shelley Duvall (POPEYE's Olive Oyl). Also on DVD.

CRUEL INTENTIONS

Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe, Reese Witherspoon. Teen heat remake of DANGEROUS LIASONS set in contemporary NYC high school elite, wherein Gellar and stepbrother Phillippe pop cherries and crush reps for their own entertainment and put their semi-incestuous lust for one another on the line betting over virgin territory Witherspoon. Lots of posh 'R' turf posing, posturing, profanity, and porking, but it's a nasty, glitzy reptile show throughout. Go directly to GO, do not collect \$200.

GO

Katie Holmes, Sarah Polly, Scott Wolf, Jay Mohr. Excellent ensemble cast, delicious story structured to strip its threads and turn back to the source point so as to follow the misadventures of each and every one of its characters to their illogical conclusions — and the culmination of one evening's very frantic activity. First of the post-PULP FICTION generation of films (from the director of SWINGERS) to emulate the potential of that film's ingenious narrative structure (introduced by Stanley Kubrick with THE KILLING back in 1956), rather than copping the mayhem, mock-mojo, and attitude. Great fun, one of the best of the year. Also on DVD. Highly recommended.

TRUE CRIME

Director/star Clint Eastwood's latest is another fine piece and rich self-deprecating character study, despite the lukewarm critical and boxoffice reception it received. Eastwood plays a reporter whose career and marriage is on the skids, entrusted in the eleventh hour by editor James Woods to cover a convicted killer's last day on death row. Bucking the odds, he instinctively deconstructs the case against the convict, and begins to suspect an innocent man is unjustly facing execution. Builds with deceptive calm to its taut final act, pausing to reveal the nooks and crannies of the characters (including a mortifying visit to the zoo), crackling when Woods and Eastwood are onscreen. Even when he's catching his breath with efforts like this one, Eastwood is one of our finest filmmakers working today. Recommended.

THE JACK BULL

John Cusack stars and produces what was clearly a labor of love, the powerful tale of horse rancher Myrl Redding (Cusack) whose personal integrity (and support for Wyoming's pending bid for statehood) pisses off wealthy landbaron Henry Ballard (vet character actor L.Q. Jones in excellent form), sparking a conflict that leads to vigilante action, a manhunt, and trial, devastating Redding's family and scorching the entire territory. Grounded in the land, ethics, and grass roots people of its narrative, this is without a doubt the finest American Western since Clint Eastwood's *THE UNFORGIVEN*, deeply moral and absolutely relevant to today's issues and abuses of power. Evocative of the best work of genre masters like John Ford and Anthony Mann, it's also the best picture director John Badham (*SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER*, *WAR GAMES*) has helmed in over a decade, though it's Cusack's show first and foremost. Fine casting throughout, with John Goodman delivering a memorable turn as the judge entrusted with dispensing ultimate justice. One of the best of the year; highly recommended. Also on DVD.



VIRUS

Jamie Lee Curtis, William Baldwin, Donald Sutherland.

This tanked in theaters and was critically scorned, but it's a lively, inventive variation on the inexplicable 1990's streak of sea-monster movies in which stellar casts wander seemingly endless dark-and-wet corridors (*LEVIATHAN*, *DEEP RISING*, etc.). Easily the best of the breed, based on an obscure Dark Horse Comics mini-series. Also on DVD.

Y2K: YEAR TO KILL

Scrappy low-budget Spectrum Films beats Roger Corman to the punch with the first unabashed exploitation of the Y2K hysteria. As the shit hits the fan, a gang of young hoodlums loot, pillage, and murder, targeting those who were actually prepared for the Millennium madness. Ray Milland said it all in *PANIC IN THE YEAR ZERO* (1961), but we're braced for a new streak of pending-Apocalyptic mayhem — and here's the first volley. Duck!

THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE

Post-demise-of-Walt, Pre-LITTLE MERMAID Disney animated feature isn't usually ranked with the studio's real classics, but (like *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*, from this same limbo Disney era) this period rodent pastiche of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes archetype has many charms. Primary among them is Vincent Price's vocal performance as the villain, who kidnaps a toymaker whose daughter engages the services of Baker Street's finest. Don't overlook this gem.



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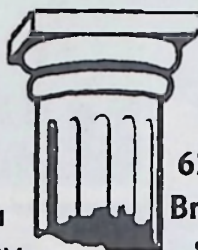
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THE MOD SQUAD

Claire Danes, Giovanni Ribisi, Omar Epps.

Tepid tea, despite casting that should have lent this some juice. Anachronistic flotsam force-fed to a generation that has no context whatsoever for the word "Mod," and certainly wasn't crying out for another big-budget retread of a forgotten TV series from the late 1960's that sucked back then, too. What Hollywood stooge thought THIS was a good idea? If you must watch it, don't say we didn't warn you.

- S.R. Bissette

EARTH GIRLS ARE EASY

Take a trip down memory lane with this loopy sci-fi musical directed by Julien Temple. Geena Davis plays a Valley Girl beautician on the skids until three aliens land in her pool. Her makeovers of these hairy creatures is a hoot.

Jim Carrey and Damon Wayans, both relative unknowns in '89, play sidekicks to Jeff Goldblum.

PRINCE OF EGYPT

This animated version of Moses leading the Jews out of slavery packs a wallop. The characters actually look ethnic, plus there's wonderful animation and special effects. Especially breathtaking are a sandstorm in the desert, and at the end, Moses's parting of the waters. A guy flick from the get-go, but at least a few women are present and represented as strong.

- Brooks Robards

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FUNNY GAMES

What could be more terrifying than a German slasher-flick? Two evilly teutonic young men terrorize and murder wealthy families in their vacation homes. The soundtrack has tunes from Handel to John Zorn's Naked City and uses them wonderfully. This film pokes fun at film and this decidedly American genre, while still being truly frightening. The smiling faces of the two killers tear at you and director Michael Hanke has created an intelligent horror that lets the viewer feel entrenched in the victims' fear.

- Duke Aaron

Il Duce



punco godyn presents...

SPAZMO!

Well, the heat wave has hit us big time, and I'm expecting most of you have been going to the theaters to cool down and check out the summer blockbusters.

In particular there's been a certain film out that the throngs have been hitting. A long-awaited sequel by a creative genius who is able to transport us to a faraway world and a faraway time, with a fairytale-like story where the hero is triumphant. I was worried about all the hype surrounding this film, and all the commercialization, but I swallowed my concerns, saw the film, and was blown away.

The film of course, was *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. Greatest movie of the season: there was no competition. Just go see it. Again and again.

Now I know some of the folks out there might be grumbling in their parents' basements that I wasn't heaping praise on another certain film that's out there, namely *That George Lucas Movie That Shall Remain Nameless Because It Sucked Sucked Sucked*. So just a few words on this chunky loaf¹:

I will admit that I'm not the biggest fan of this series. Outside of a brief period in 1978, when I somehow felt compelled to spend \$40 on a Darth Vader mask, I seem to be otherwise missing the S.W. gene, and haven't really followed the series with much love. But I do feel the first movie is a great film. It's fun, it tells a story, and it moves along at a good clip. It's got classic characters, and it ties up all the loose ends. The subsequent films have paled in comparison, particularly when Lucas felt compelled to infuse the story with muppets like Yoda and the Eyucks.

I will give Lucas some credit here for this latest film, though. It must be very difficult to make a film that is so

abysmally dull while simultaneously playing so much of the movie towards fans with the IQ of a retarded seven-year-old. I knew I was in for trouble when the film started with this scrolling dissertation on an outer-space trade embargo. Parts of this film came across like C-Span with light sabers: the floating Senate pods, the ponderous Jedi Council, that in comparison makes the Northampton City Council look like the party sequence from *Laugh-In*. Yet at the same time we have dear ol' Jar Jar Binks, the computer-generated racial slur and "laugh riot" geared for the kiddies with access to Daddy's credit card. He is the best candidate for crucifixion that we've seen in a long time.

What a cynically produced piece of ass-wipage. Never has the profit-motive of a film-maker been so transparent: at least the ceaseless product plugs in *Austin Powers* made for a good laugh. I get the sense that Lucas stopped caring about the story a long, long time ago in a cocaine cloud very far, far away. He's made a commitment to crank out this cinematic sausage: is this the best story he could come up with in 16 frikkin' years?

Let's put aside the fact that a boatload of great actors like Liam Neeson and the increasingly babealicious Natalie Portman are completely wasted with stilted dialogue that does nothing to get us interested in the characters (when Alec Guinness dies in the first flick, I cried: when Liam gets croaked, I'm like, who was that guy, anyway?). Sometimes that's the way it goes with an epic, and it can be an easy hurdle to get over if the story's good: they weren't exactly speaking prose poems in the first movie.

But Lucas sacrifices character for exposition, and what exposition! All that was missing was MacNeill/Lehrer doing a summation at the end of the second hour. Boring exposition, big scene change, some explosions, boring exposition, scene change, blah blah blah. Meanwhile, back on Naboo, I couldn't give a crap.

Making the film a prequel to the story we all know takes all the suspense

out of it. We know the kid is going to live, and that good will triumph, eventually. We also know he's going to end up being Darth Vader, so don't get your hopes up about him being too good in the NEXT movies. And we know the kid is going to shtup Miss Portman, and sire Luke and Leia, which makes for a couple of creepy scenes in this flick.

Yeah, so the special effects are good, but the story sucks. Throughout the battle sequences, I kept thinking, there are some good stories out there that this kind of technology could be used to tell, instead of this waste. And as I write, there's a fellow in New Zealand doing just that, making an effects-packed movie trilogy out of *The Lord of the Rings*, which I predict will not only kick ass, but also bring all my stoner friends from high school out of the woodwork.

To enjoy *That George Lucas Movie That Shall Remain Nameless Because It Sucked Sucked Sucked*, you have to try way harder than I was willing to commit. And believe me, I've had to try hard in my time (*Star Trek V*, anyone?). I hear a lot of rationalization coming out in defense of this film. The best I've seen is on the Internet, where one fellow said you can't get the whole experience in one viewing, that it's just too much for the viewer. To me that says it's a failure: if you have to squint and turn your head and chant to enjoy it, there's probably something wrong with it. Kind of like Godard.

The same weekend that I saw *That George Lucas Movie That Shall Remain Nameless Because It Sucked Sucked Sucked*, I saw *The Mummy*, which, as they say in the vernacular, kicked ass. It had everything that the Lucas sludge was missing. It was a good old-fashioned monster movie with action, laughs, and a little romance. It had a beginning, middle, and end, which once upon a time wasn't a lot to ask for. Brendan Fraser kicking the heads off of snarling mummies: what more can you ask for in a date movie?

¹Side note here: if ever a certain area critic ever needed to prove his irrelevance, it was in his reviews of *Austin Powers* and *That George Lucas Movie That Shall Remain Nameless*.... gushing all over himself like the flabbiest fanboy over the Lucas sludge, while completely missing the point and the post-modern genius of A.P. Keep smoking those avocados, pappy.



"Most of the evils that continue to beset American journalism today, in truth, are not due to the rascality of owners nor even to the Kiwanian bombast of business managers, but simply and solely to the stupidity, cowardice and Philistinism of working newspaper men."

- H.L. Mencken,

Journalism in America

A lineup such as we have in the Valley — *The Daily Hampshire Gazette*, *Valley Advocate*, *Union News*, *Business West*, *Greenfield Recorder* — would cause even Mencken to thrash about in his grave. There are no platitudes too mundane, no fluff too fawning, no boosterism too embarrassing to escape the embrace of the Valley's fifth estate. This column is dedicated to the spirit of H.L. Mencken and to Philistines everywhere.

"BARELY ADEQUATE" NO LONGER

The news that New Mass. Media, which owns the *Valley Advocate* and four other publications, was purchased by a subsidiary of the *Hartford Courant* — itself owned by media conglomerate Times Mirror Company — elicited a squeak and a whimper from the object of the corporate coup.

In the only article to appear about this important story, the *Advocate* chose to mimic its mainstream brethren by engaging in an orgy of self glorification. The author of the April 22 piece, Carole Bass, rhetorically inquired as to whether the "slavishly pro corporate" *Hartford Courant* could run "truly alternative" weeklies

such as the *Advocate* and its sister publications, ones that "speak truth to power... regardless of how many advertisers they piss off;" and "push every story as far as the limits of fair and responsible journalism will stretch."

Really? As a case in point, let's ignore the dozens of recent articles that disprove the hyperbole and look at the very article in which those words appeared. Did the author and editors take the opportunity to examine the larger issues of media consolidation? Was there a fair and honest assessment of the state of the media in the Pioneer Valley? Was there evidence to support the allegation that the *Valley Advocate* takes a fearless approach to the news?

Not at all. Instead of speaking truth to power and pushing the story as far as it could go, a good portion of the article was given to a profile of the new and former owners of New Mass. Media. They were asked probing questions such as the types of cars they drove, their favorite sex columnist, what smokes ("ribs, chicken and turkey," said former publisher Geoff Robinson), whether or not they had ever been arrested and their opinion of the Sex Pistols. (New owner Marty Petty is a Jethro Tull fan). Seriously. I'm not making this up.

Meanwhile, *Valley Advocate* managing editor and columnist Tom Vannah, being predictably unpredictable, went out on a limb and said that the acquisition was the best thing that could have happened to the *Advocate*. In one of his first columns as an employee of a large corporation, Vannah railed against "the knee-jerk reaction against corporations that is endemic to many so-called alternative papers." Under the protective cover of new ownership he took a parting shot at former owners Christine Austin and Geoff Robinson, citing their

"personal and philosophical conflicts" and their "strict attention to the bottom line."

Where was Vannah when those same attributes turned the *Advocate* into a shell of its former self? You have to admire the gumption of a true company man.

TRIPLE CHEESE

In it's July/August issue *The Columbia Journalism Review* awarded a dart, as opposed to a laurel, to the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. The March 15 edition of the *Gazette* featured teasers above the paper's front-page logo for three items of great import; a local sports event, a national sports event, and a coupon for a free pizza from the Pizza Factory.

Actually the free pizza is substantial compared to the soft news that is the paper's standard fare. In a recent six-part series on the arts in Northampton and an in-depth look last year at the Coolidge Bridge, one element was missing; reality. Like a brainwashed cult devotee, the *Gazette*, on a daily basis, intones the myth that the city is a prosperous arts colony, a paradise of upscale spending when, by any yardstick, it is a city in decline.

I have cited the following figures before but here they are again. Between 1980 and 1996 the region lost 27,856 manufacturing jobs and gained 27,117 service jobs. In Northampton, service sector jobs in 1996 accounted for 41.2 percent of the total number of jobs in the city, and the number is rising. Trade jobs, which include restaurant and bar workers, accounted for almost 25 percent of all jobs in 1996. Average annual wages for Northampton in 1996 were 91% of the regional figure of \$27,487. Wages in the service sector averaged \$21,872, 28 percent below the regional mean; wages in the retail trade averaged of \$12,684, or 45 percent below the mean.

Job growth in Northampton in the period 1993-1996 was 0.4 percent; in the same period the labor force shrunk by 2%. Northampton's population of around 30,000 is almost the same as it was in 1970. Population growth between 1970-1990 declined by 1.2 percent, compared to a statewide gain of 5.8 percent. (Source: Northampton/Easthampton Economic Development Report, available at the Northampton Planning Office.)

Any assessment of Northampton, whether in the context of the arts, politics, or infrastructure must take place against the backdrop of a radical and sudden shift to a service economy, a declining labor pool, stagnant population growth and loss of living wage jobs. Those are the indicators of where Northampton is going, not the myths promulgated by the *Gazette*.

VMAG: GROWING PAINS OR A PAIN IN THE ASS?

The goon child of local journalism that you now hold in your hands is in it's third year of publication but is showing few signs of growing up. A perfect example is the policy of printing anonymous letters to the editor. There is no chance for an exchange of ideas or honest debate under such a policy; nothing that is said can be taken seriously by anyone else if the authors themselves won't own up to their own words.

I call upon Murphy, a real mensch in all other respects, to boldly move forward. Spread a little money around, Murph. With the *Advocate* dead and buried as an alternative you have a golden opportunity. Seize it!

DAVE BIEDERMAN

MEDIA DOG



SHOOT

THE MESSENGER

ROBERT TOBEY

IT WAS MARSHALL McLuhan, droll and brilliant, who said that picking up the morning newspaper was like slipping into a warm bath. By which he meant that immersion in media is not a voluntary act of mental and social betterment—as we flatter ourselves to believe—but, for most of us, a kind of comfy and soothing old habit, a reflex action, a fond, reassuring and finally sensual rut to recline in—an activity akin to knitting, or smoking a pipe, or sucking your thumb—a semi-conscious and dreamy dip in a stream of typical gray sentiments wrapped in predictable gray verbiage. Our attraction to “the news,” and media in general, while superficially prompted by a desire to engage in culture and community, is more often a compulsive distraction from actual involvement. (How many times you have chosen to retreat into a newspaper than to actually talk to someone, be it spouse, friend, or stranger; or do something about a dire situation—homelessness, say—rather than just feel nobly sorry, and “involved” in the issue while scanning the paper?) Most of our time spent within the cocoon of media is a hideout, a diversionary tactic, an idling of the intellectual engine, a twiddling of the cerebral thumbs, a form of nervous assuagement, and a lofty-seeming sidestepping around our daily dread.

It has been our observation here at VMag that the local journalistic waters have grown gray and tepid, and littered with too many twofer-coupons and old Best-Of ballots.

Herein, in this proposed monthly column, we will shoot the messenger—or at least do a little stand-up on him—not for bringing bad news, but for bringing the news badly.

DAILY NEWSPAPERS—and especially the small and mid-size locals—are supposed to be avuncular and gray. Like tasteful wallpaper they are meant not to upset or surprise, but to blend, and to blend us by granting a minimal and nominal sense of belonging and good-conscience. They act as a kind of low background noise, a part of our reassurance that all is right with the world, or that if

something is wrong—be it car crash or political firestorm—the police and the firemen have been called, the mess is being cleaned up, life will resume—and by our good, conscientious remedial effort—be better than ever. The impulse to be pleasing to all parties—an impulse that derives from the instinct for economic survival—is the bane of daily newspapers and the cause of the relentless equivocation that goes by the name “fairness.”

On the plus side, for sheer volume of plain information, the dailies can’t be beat, and when they’re accurate, and the reporters are competent (reporters at daily papers aren’t supposed to be much more than competent—a really great reporter is liable to be perceived as a threat; to the status quo within and/or beyond the editorial office) dailies do serve as a reasonably unwarped mirror of the culture. We have, relatively speaking, good dailies in the Valley. The *Daily Hampshire Gazette* is unquestionably among the best small dailies in the country, and it seems to get better all the time. The *Union News* has improved substantially over its embarrassing past; and the *Greenfield Recorder* is good in the quaintest ways that local newspapers used to be: it feels like a humble and natural expression of the town it serves (and its photography is some of the best being published).

What goes on at the local “alternative,” the *Valley Advocate*, is more disappointing and more complex—and further complicated by the recent sale of the chain of *Advocate* papers (for a rumored 15 million dollars) to the *Hartford Courant*. History has given us higher expectations for reformist and radical journals—bona fide social revolutions have been inspired and advanced by the publishing and pamphleteering of dissenting opinion—when they step back from that cutting-edge there is a real question about their purpose, their identity, their integrity. And in America, where the big wide-open secret is that everything is run by money, the alternative press has faced a special challenge vis a vis the question of

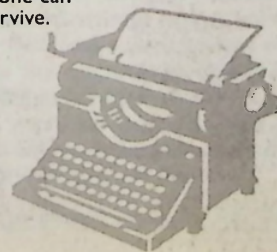
“selling out,” and the upshot has been, predictably, compromise and hypocrisy—compromise of journalistic standards, and hypocrisy in the area of employee relations. I am reminded of a line from *A Civil Action*, by Jonathan Harr (himself a former *Advocate* editor), wherein Jan Schlichtmann, the crusading and money-minded lawyer, wanted to “make money by doing good.” Well, the *Advocate*, finally, has done very well, but often, and in many ways, it has not been very good.

Once upon a time—I don’t think I’m being nostalgic—the *Advocate* set the local standards in three areas: investigative reporting, involvement in the local arts scene, and imaginative visual design. Both the *Union News* and the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* learned very valuable lessons from the *Advocate* in its heyday—lessons the *Advocate* itself—sad irony—seems to have forgotten. While the earlier and flashier investigative efforts of the *Advocate* were often criticized (often correctly) for being rash and overdramatized, one had the sense reading them that real chances were being taken, that forbidden and secret regions of public policy and corporate misbehavior were being explored and exposed for the elucidation of the public. There was a time when just about everyone wondered what the *Advocate* was going to do this week. The *Advocate* of the moment is, factually speaking, a good deal more reliable, considerably less hysterical, and about as well-edited—in a good-grammar and clean-copy sort of way—as it has ever been. Its reportorial and editorial staff, while drastically withered when compared to the plummy days of the late 70’s and early 80’s, is uniformly talented. But there is a cookie cutter quality to the final product, a very dreary McDonalds sort of compartmentalization, and an overall dumbing-down of design standards, that makes it all seem worth skipping right over. If written words exemplify the mind, and if the design and presentation surrounding those words can be compared to a comely physique meant to draw you in for a conversation, then the *Advocate* looks to me like a brain without a

body.

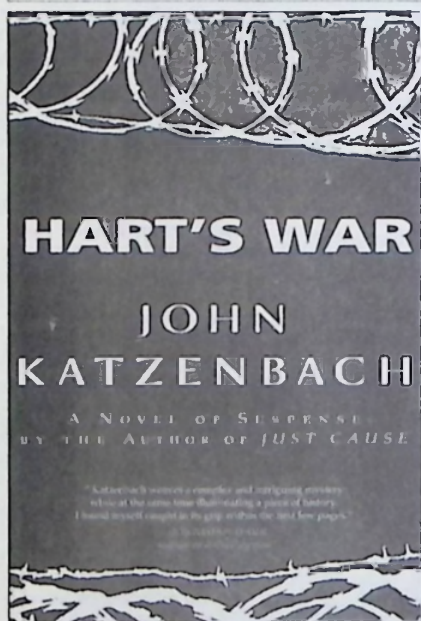
This is sad. Publications that have an allegiance to the Pop sensibility (and its radical respect for the senses and the sensual) can only benefit by paying sophisticated and lively attention to visual quality. You could blame it on the tyranny of economics: the *Advocate* is ugly with advertising these days: ugly in volume and ugly in quality. But it is not impossible to be profitable and look good at the same time; other publications do it. Of course it saves some money not to hire photographers, and then not to give them much space when you do hire them, and not to spend the extra time it takes to put together an inventive and original design, but I think it is mostly just laziness and an easy way out. If the ads are there, and people keep picking it up off the floor, and nobody complains (especially advertisers), why bother, why go through the extra trouble? Everything at the *Advocate* is done a little too much by the book these days; the editing, the design, the predictable genuflecting to business and the powerbrokers of culture. It’s a pragmatism that has cynicism and self-interest at its roots.

The argument has been made regarding the *Advocate* that it is better to have a half-assed alternative than no alternative at all, but I’m not so sure. It’s become a massive money-sucking machine (why else would the *Hartford Courant* pay so much? because they loved the way the *Hartford Advocate* mocked them?), and like an overgrown weed, it sucks up the available sustenance, threatening extinction for all newcomers regardless of quality. At one time a valid battler of monopolies, the *Advocate* has become one. At one time a true alternative to an anemic press, it should now be obvious that the *Advocate* itself is a worthy provocation for a new alternative. If one can survive.



good reads

Hart's War
by John Katzenbach
Ballantine Books
\$24.95



Part mystery, part court-room drama, and part WWII novel, John Katzenbach spins an intriguing, exciting, and original story with **Hart's War**. The novel is set in a Nazi POW camp towards the end of the war. Within a short period of Tuskegee airman Lincoln Scott's arrival in camp, a race-baiting southerner is violently murdered and all the evidence points to the lone black fighter pilot. The American prisoners bring him to trial and Tommy Hart is appointed as his defense council. What starts out as an open-and-shut case soon becomes a spider-web of lies, intrigue, and deception that Hart is forced to maneuver through. The author does a wonderful job drawing realistic, imperfect characters for us and admirably chooses to steer away from the black and white, cardboard figures one would expect. Through Hart's nightmares and memories, the book deals genuinely with the soldier's guilt at surviving his comrades. Hart's Harvard Law studies have been interrupted by the war, but

he has continued them while a prisoner with the help of a famed English barrister and a Canadian policeman, also interred for the duration. These three men are pitted against overwhelming evidence, an experienced prosecutor, and superior officers that want a "fair" trial to happen, before they convict Scott and execute him. The search for the truth throws them into contest with fellow soldiers, their Nazi wardens, and a one-armed Gestapo agent whose intent no one can fathom. Through many twists and turns, the real story is unraveled for us a piece at a time and ends in an edge-of-your seat finale. These fine characters are forced to reconcile themselves to new understandings of conscience, duty, justice, and respect. As wonderful as this all sounds, there are problems with the book. Katzenbach is heavy with his use of foreshadowing and thus allows the reader to guess where the next plot twist will turn. A lot of the suspense that is painstakingly crafted becomes seriously diminished and this drastically takes away from the exciting action. What could have had me panting for each new turn of the page often allowed my somewhat limited intellect to skip ten or twenty pages ahead.

The portrayal of Lincoln Scott is also seriously flawed. A black man in the 1940's with a Ph.D. and an impressive military career is hard to believe as an individual that can't control his impetuous behavior. His case is continually worsened by his own actions and in the end he can really only be controlled by his white-knight and savior, Tommy Hart. This was somewhat ridiculous. The Tuskegee pilots were the best of the best. They were washed out of the training program with the most insignificant of slips and the successful graduates had plenty of experience controlling their indignation towards racist fellow officers. By characterizing Scott as a chip-on-shoulder, out-of-control black, Katzenbach does a serious disservice to the memory of some of the strongest and most noble men in our nation's history. The author also fails by allowing the Nazi captors a little too much dignity. The by-the-book and overly precise Commandant is a righteous soldier, merely serving his

country's cause. Naturally he despises the evil Gestapo agent and the feeling is mutual. This is too simplistic. After all these years, does the excuse of "just following orders" still hold water? I don't think so and as this novel centers around morality and conscience, the author fails to adequately examine the culpability of high ranking German officers. Apparently, only American southerners and the Gestapo were racists. Someone had better tell my uncle Moishe.

The portrayal of the prisoners' squalor and misery was touching and very realistic. Hart's character is not so loosely based on the author's father and his real experiences as a POW and law student. A man, surely, to admire for an amazing strength of will. The desperation, fear, and loneliness of a captured soldier was presented in the most moving and understated of ways. Bravo. Similarly, the difference in treatment of Allied prisoners and their short-lived Russian counterparts is powerful. The Nazi tendency towards inhuman brutality shines through in these scenes and helps ground the book within its flights of fancy. On the sidelines are escape attempts that bring Hogan's Heroes to mind and there is even a German guard that "knows nothing," but perhaps I am being too harsh. The big attempt more aptly resembles *The Great Escape* and is well thought out and cleverly devised. In this context Katzenbach deftly examines the self-serving, mercenary drives of the top level prisoners to achieve escapes while they are in command: sorrowful and all too able to be believed.

This is John Katzenbach's seventh novel. His novel, *In the Heat of the Summer*, became the film, *The Mean Season*, and was nominated for the Edgar Award. His other books include *The Traveler*, *Day of Reckoning*, *Just Cause* (also made into a film), *The Shadow Man*, and *State of Mind*. He was a criminal court reporter for *The Miami Herald* and *Miami News*, and wrote for the *Herald's Tropic* magazine as well. Of course his greatest claim to fame is... that he lives in our own lovely western Mass.

- Duke Aaron

Il Duce

What Jazz Is:

An Insider's Guide to Understanding and Listening to Jazz

by Jonny King

Walker & Co.

\$12.95



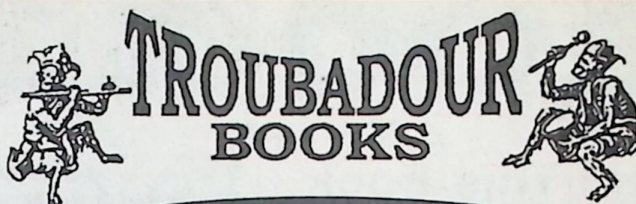
Jonny King is a young jazz pianist and composer who has set himself a daunting task. The title of his book is descriptive of his goal, to try to define "What Jazz Is." How well he succeeds, I think, has more to do with where the reader is at... jazz music is not something that most are casual about. Generally people are crazy about it, or they think that those who dig it are crazy. There

is not much middle ground. This is not a book that will convert the non-believer. It is a description of what happens up on the bandstand, and at the recording studio. He tries to demystify the process, and attempts to explain the role of the instruments, harmony, melody, and improvisation in the world of the jazz musician. He walks us through a gig, picking musicians and material. He also includes a recording guide that features specific recordings that highlight different styles of jazz.

King is well connected in the world of the "Young Lions" of jazz. He received a degree from Princeton while working local clubs with Kenny Garrett and Ray Drummond. It was there he met his mentor, Mulgrew Miller. He attended Harvard Law School and worked the Boston area as well as New York with Joshua Redman, who appears on his 1996 Enja recording *Notes From The Underground*, and Christian McBride, who penned the foreword to *What Jazz Is*.

This book is probably most valuable to someone who is already interested in jazz at some level. King's writing is clear and concise, but also filled with the emotion that he feels for the music he loves and chooses to play. He can help you to understand what the musicians are trying to get to, and his recording guide will help you see how the music has developed. There are also eleven very fine black and white photographs of some of the leading names in jazz. It is impossible to explain "swing" and the magic of improvised music to someone who doesn't hear it, and if you feel charmed by the swing of jazz it is not necessary to explain it. If you are curious about its history and processes this can be a most enlightening book that is enthusiastic about its subject and never talks down to the reader.

- Bud Callahan



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good reads

Feel This Book

An Essential Guide to Self Empowerment, Spiritual Supremacy, and Sexual Satisfaction
By Ben Stiller and Janeane Garofalo
Ballantine Books
\$22.95



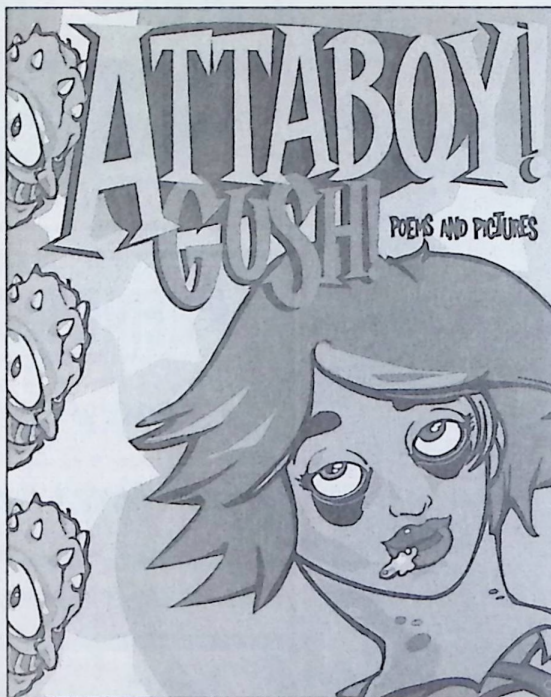
Using a rotating authorship on the chapters, Ben Stiller and Janeane Garofalo have written a witty, informative, and very funny guide to love, sex, and dysfunction. It captures all the wry, dry,

and ironic humor of both authors perfectly. They suggest using the book as a manual instead of a straight read-through: *"Just as swallowing an entire jug of elderberry wine would make you sick and nauseous, yet a few sips with dinner brings a warm happy glow, so too, it is with this book."*

I found Ben Stiller's chapters to be the most entertaining; Janeane's endless footnotes lost their charm after a while. In the "Selfhood" chapter, Ben suggests making nine basic hoods to wear for the appropriate mood, including the MADHOOD, CHEERFULHOOD, POUTYHOOD, and HORNYHOOD. He reasons that these hoods will clear up all confusion in relationships and bring an end to the "But how do you feel?" questions. (He also advises making a NOTKKKKHOOD.) Ben's "Fastermations" serve as a way to quickly and effectively positively affirm yourself; they are short poems or chants to say while doing everyday tasks. He provides several example-mations, like a Urination Fastermation, a Masturbation Fastermation, and an Alcohol Fastermation. Also notable is his soul-searching road diary.

A list of pseudo-chapters like "Do You Even Deserve A Relationship?," "Monogamy - Is It For You?," "Why Can't I Sleep Around And Still Love You?" and "Fantasy and Reality... and Hookers" is also good for a laugh.

- Aundria Theocles



GUSH!

Poems and Pictures
By Attaboy!
\$3.95

Yeah, baby! Here is some seriously killer artwork and poems from former local, Attaboy! He recently fled to the other coast (Bay Area) and is sorely missed. **GUSH!** is great and certainly worth the measly and somewhat nominal charge. Severed heads, semi-nude women, little gremlin things, bizarre fish, eyeballs, and other fun stuff make up the art splattered through this little book. There is even a sticker of the disturbingly sexy back cover included (and is now prominently displayed on my office door). How to describe the style? How about one part Dali, one part Renoir, two jiggers of acid, stir and serve chilled? That is as good as I can do. There are a lot of good pieces included and it is definitely nice to see someone do fun stuff that is still socio-politically relevant. Attaboy! is surely right when he tells us that "They own us" (*italics added*).

The poetry is fresh and honest, with little of the self-important artsy

crap that tends to follow around most young writers like the Liver-Man spare changing. Most of the subject matter and themes are personal and very observational. Much comes across as commentary and the use of repetition works well, driving the point and a mental image home. He certainly has chosen self-deprecation as a tool, but I would suggest that this can only work for so long and I hope that his writing grows out of it. Attaboy! is obviously a multi-talented individual with a lot of creativity and a happy medium of humility and braggadocio would be a nice place for him to settle into. Some of the shorter poems are really funny and gave me a sense that Attaboy! would have done well in the Catskills or opening for

someone like Steven Wright. The longer pieces ran the spectrum from silly and odd to strange and beautiful. Many of them have been performed live and/or released in other formats, but the whole package of **GUSH!** works very well.

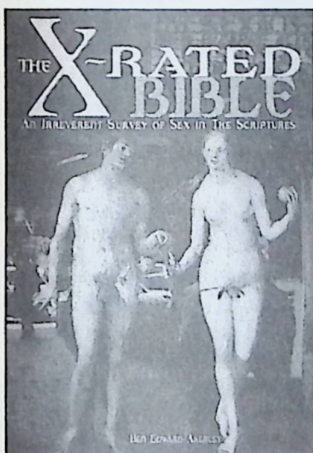
There is a T-Shirt offer in the back with some pretty cool artwork and a page devoted to the upcoming comic hero, Phallic Boy (his arch nemesis is one Rabbi Sharpstein) and to tell the truth I can't tell if this is a clever joke or a real comic. I hope it really comes out (no pun intended). Attaboy! is a toy designer and his designs are marketed by bigwig toy industry types everywhere. He's put out **YUM**, a coloring book, two micro CD books, a bunch of stickers, and other fun stuff. There is a live performance tape available (recorded live to DAT at NoHo's little spot of hipness, the Fire and Water Cafe) and other things too. Attaboy! can be contacted at Attaboy!, 508 D Civic Dr., Walnut Creek CA 94596, and **GUSH!** can be ordered from there or www.benwaystudios.com or at www.amazon.com.

- Duke Aaron
H Duce

books in brief

The X-Rated Bible

By Ben Edward Akerley
Feral House
\$14.95



The X-Rated Bible. originally published in 1985 by Atheist Foundation founder, Madalyn Murray O'Hair (who has since mysteriously disappeared) can be best summed up in much the same way the Bible can be summed up: G vs. E, that is, as Good vs. Evil:

Good:

1) Humorous concept - this book details exclusively all the juicy stuff in the Good Book that may go unnoticed in a casual reading, due to its sometimes esoteric writing style.

2) Very witty writing, and fun biblical commentary.

3) You get to learn more about the Bible, or refresh your memory of it.

4) There is a scholarly approach to this book: Akerley knows his stuff Bible-wise, and includes extra biblical sources, such as the Talmud, and *Psychology Today*.

5) There are swears.

Evil:

1) Oftentimes, when an indelicate passage from the Bible speaks for itself, Akerley simply quotes it and sums it up, with no humor added. I guess there's not much else he could do with those passages, but it just wasn't engaging. I sort of ended up glazing over a lot of those parts.

So: would St. Peter let this book go through the gates of good reading? Sure, why not? After all, even a Saint needs a good laugh now and again.

- Andrea Carlin

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good reads

The Exes by Pagan Kennedy Scribner Paperback Fiction \$11.



Pagan Kennedy is not, I repeat, *not*, a moron! Having said this, I now am forced to give you some opinions on her horrific, Beavis-ish novel, *The Exes*. Kennedy was a columnist (a good one) for the *Voice Literary Supplement* and writes for *The Nation*, *Interview*, *The Utne Reader*, *Mademoiselle*, *The Boston Phoenix*, and *Spin*. So how does an idiotic book about a Boston rock band come out of this fairly, well-respected writer? I'm thinking blood-clot. The story is about a four person group of ex-lovers (hence the name of band and novel) that are trying to make it in the indie music scene. What we get are plastic-figure characters that represent the worst in the media-created notion of Generation-X. No, the baby-boomer's kids are not all idiots, slackers, fools, morons, or anything else that could suggest group homogeneity. Well, Pagan Kennedy falls into the trap laid out for her and presents a stilted, dumbed-down story of rock-n-roll in the nineties.

Hank, described in the press release as "sort of a hunky boy-next-door," is the band's unofficial leader. He plays guitar, likes control, and wants to be famous. Lilly, Hank's Ex, is a flighty, tem-

peramental chick that is the creative force and lead singer in the band. She, like Hank, wants to be famous. Shaz is a bisexual bassist and Pakistani Muslim. She works in an erotic cake shop. Ho hum. Shaz is afraid of fame and of losing control of her fractured life. Finally, we come to Shaz's Ex, Walt. He is the drummer, and suffers from depression. He had a breakdown, but is now fine and on the proper medication. Yadda, yadda, yadda. He is not interested in fame, but is a scientific genius and owns a van. Hello... did a freakin' robot write this drivel? What a concept. I've read some dumb books, but this takes the cake, erotic or otherwise. The characters are dimensionless, stupid, insipid, insulting, and whatever other negative descriptors you can think of that follow along these lines. I mean, *Holy Shit, Batman*, what the hell possessed someone to attach their name to this? Did a publisher read this and say, "Wow... I must have this. Here's your advance." This novel just might be the final proof that free-market economics simply cannot regulate itself.

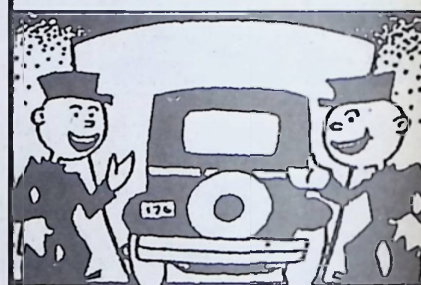
The story takes place within four large chapters and each chapter is told from the point of view of a different member of the band. High art, I am sure. The book is set in the Boston, Cambridge area and mentions some clubs for local color, but could have really been set anywhere. It follows the breakup of Hank and Lilly into the realm of friendship and on into the formation of the band. Shaz quits her old band days before they go on a major tour and slides into place as a member of the Exes. Lilly requires her to go find a drummer she used to date and Shaz comes back with manic-depressive Walt and his van. When Hank sees the van, Walt is in. They play. Everyone loves them. They're great. They get signed to a small label. They become moderately famous. The world is at their feet. The book ends. In between is a lot of sophomoric relationship stuff, the emotions drawn from *Melrose* or *90210*. This novel should go over well with twelve year old alt-rockers or any Alanis or Jewel fans that happen to be older. My advice is to wait until FOX makes it into a show and then Aaron Spelling can cast some of his wonderful family in the roles.

This is Pagan Kennedy's second novel. Her first, *Spinsters*, was well received, as have been her books, *Stripping and Other Stories*, *Pagan Kennedy's Living*, *Platforms: A*

Microwaved Cultural Chronicle of the 1970s, and *'Zine*. She was a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship and lives in lovely Somerville, MA. Most of the glowing reviews, quoted on the book jacket, are from publications that Kennedy writes for. Make of that what you will and remember to run and hide if a novel is described as "hip" by reviewers and publishing houses galore. This is a sure sign of an over developed marketing ploy and should strike fear in the hearts of all.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce

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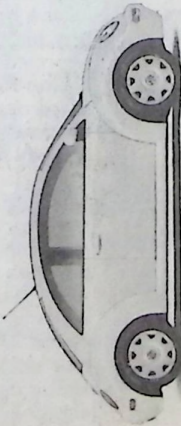
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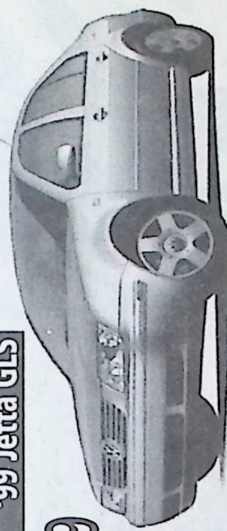
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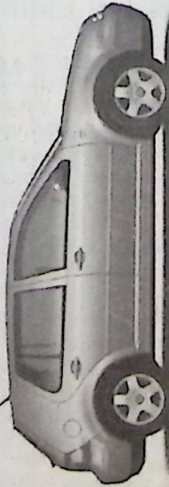
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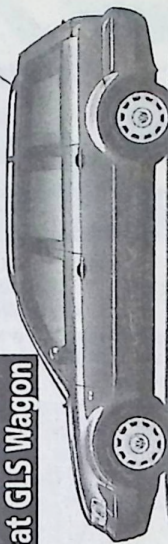
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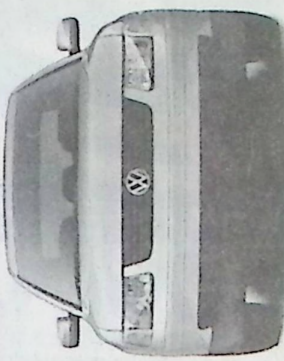
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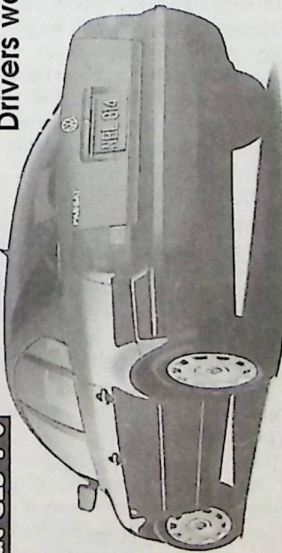
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Sometimes comic books are intentionally funny. The funniest comic book ever written was Walt Kelly's **POGO**. Now costly to purchase and hard to find, *Pogo* Possum comics still go inexplicably unprinted. Several volumes of the early 1950's newspaper strips have been anthologized by Fantagraphics Books and are well worth the reading (however, even these do not approach the laugh-out-loud strength of the four-color comics, where language and cartooning blend into you-can't-help-yourself laughter). Kelly plays with words, plays on words, and draws so well it's enjoyment for the eyes just to see it; all that and socio-political mirror-holding, too. The newspaper reprint volumes are available for \$10.95 each from Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, www.fantagraphics.com.

HIGH SOCIETY

HIGH SOCIETY reprints issues #'s 26-50 of *Cerebus the Aardvark*. These issues find Cerebus in the court of Lord Julius (Groucho Marx) who wants all of the power but none of the responsibility of leadership... and so Julius moves Cerebus into Prime Ministership, promising Cerebus all the gold and drink the government can supply. Groucho, Chico, and Cerebus divide up the country with input from Marlon Brando, representative from Da Docks, and disrespected political financier Rodney Dangerfield. All the while, rising powers of rival religious factions seek to bend Cerebus to their wills as well and, in the dark of night, a merchant turned burglar screams from the rooftops, "*Unorthodox economic revenge!!!!*" All drawn with breathtaking beauty and clarity (every celebrity cameo—Mick and Keith, Norman Mailer, Margaret Thatcher— instantly recognizable). Available for \$25 from Aardvark/Vanahelm Press, POB 1674, Station C, Kitchener, ONT Canada N2G 4R2.



THE ADVENTURES OF BARRY WEEN, BOY GENIUS

WEEN includes a first-grade field trip to an art museum and the capture of international art thieves by Ween to save the object of his (unspoken) affections. "If my IQ could be measured, it would loom somewhere around 350. If I have any consolation, it's that by the time I'm 21, I'll be certifiably insane." Barry might be Calvin (of Calvin and Hobbes) one or two years later. Writer Judd Winick's drawings have a harsh-edged cartooning style that gets a lot of expression into people's expressions. Three issues are available from Image Comics, 1440 North Harbo Blvd., Suite 305, Fullerton, CA 92835, judd@frumpy.com.

REID FLEMING, WORLD'S TOUGHEST MILKMAN

Reid Fleming is the adult that Barry Ween could grow up to be: forthright ("I'm NOT BALD, I get it CUT this way!"), irresponsible (singing, "Late late late late late, if I don't take this short-cut, I'll be late!") and able to heave a milk truck across the loading bay. Reid's admirable bad attitude toward employment and his zero tolerance for inanity coupled with a searing verbal wit make him an anti-hero for the turn of this century. David Boswell has a highly detailed way with pen and ink that gives his work an almost woodcut appearance. Published occasionally, with nine issues available from Boswell at Deep-Sea Comics #702-207 West Hastings Street Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 1H <http://deepseacomics.at.org>.

GROO THE WANDERER

GROO THE WANDERER claims to have one joke (that Groo is the stupidest creature on earth, but the world's greatest

sword-fighter) that has lasted well over 100 issues, worded by Mark Evanier and plotted and drawn by Sergio Aragones. Aragones and Evanier tell insightful stories around Groo, covering environmental concerns, political concerns (how IS it that kings have all the money?), literacy, cults of personality, and the advent of violence and commercialism in mass entertainment media (issue 84). The art is that of *Mad Magazine's* "Marginal Artist," perhaps Aragones' best-known contribution. The tempo and tenor of **GROO** have that *Mad Magazine* fervor. **GROO** has outlasted four publishers, and is now with Dark Horse Comics, 10956 SE Main, Milwaukee, OR 97222, www.darkhorse.com

BATMAN: HARLEY QUINN

Unexpectedly deep thought went into the creation of a recent Batman character, Harleen Quinzel. Harleen was a psychiatric doctor assigned to analyze the Joker, a homicidal psychopath. She fell in love, became Joker's Harley Quinn, reformed (wrote a novel, **A Harley Quinn Romance**) and now walks a dangerous line one foot firmly in sanity, the other, not. **BATMAN: HARLEY QUINN** is the newest of several single-issue "Harley stories" which began with **MAD LOVE**. Clever writing makes her a clever girl: Harley's written as witty and charming, a bit nutty, but very resourceful. She's a perfect character to tweak the silliness of superheroes, and her past appearances have proven sublimely comic. The artwork follows the new tradition of "animation-style" in which Harley debuted, and in which the most engaging Batman comics have seen print. Written by Paul Dini, art by Yvel Guichet and Aaron Sowd, from DC Comics; 48 pages for \$5.95. - Matt Levin

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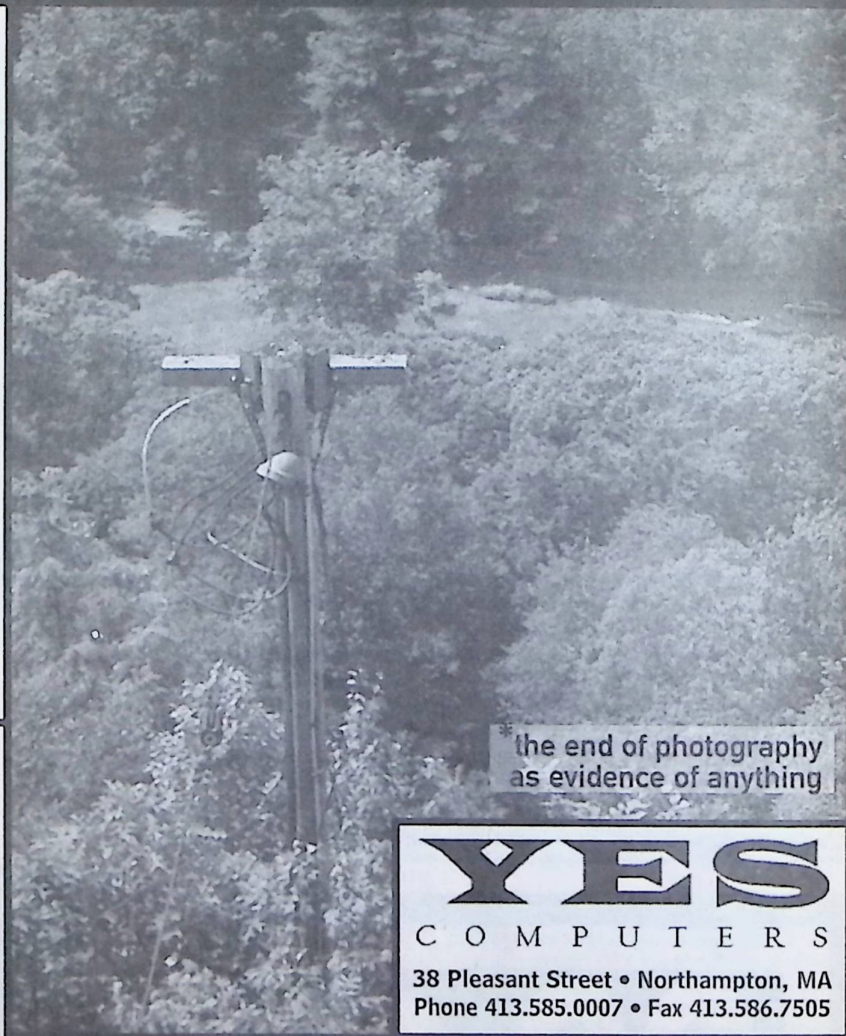
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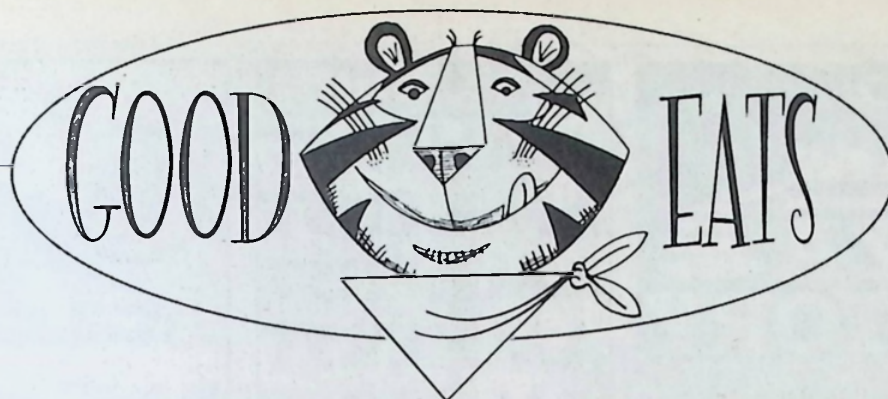


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Every town has a gazillion pizza joints, right? And some of them have to be good, right? Well, one of the best in Northampton is **Joe's Cafe**. With its laid-back ambience and funky decor (out front the walls have a Mexican motif, while the back walls are covered in college pendants and a scary mural of area campuses) Joe's is, well, Joe's. Neighborly in feel, **Joe's** has its regulars (like Karl, always armed with a pitcher of soda and a 70's paperback) and families with kids who play Def Leppard to Sinatra over the jukebox, as well as townie professionals talking sports and local politics at the bar. Regulars, families and townies are often good indicators of a place with great food, and this is definitely the case with Joe's. The garlic-mozzarella bread, the buffalo wings, and mussels are above and beyond the average appetizer. And the pizza — generous in its toppings, with crust that never gets left behind (crunchy at times due to a light rubbing with olive oil) — is among the best I've ever had. Highly recommended.

- Tony George

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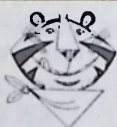
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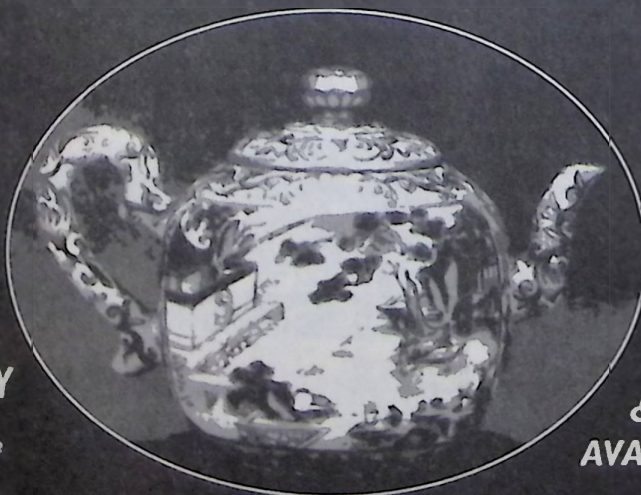
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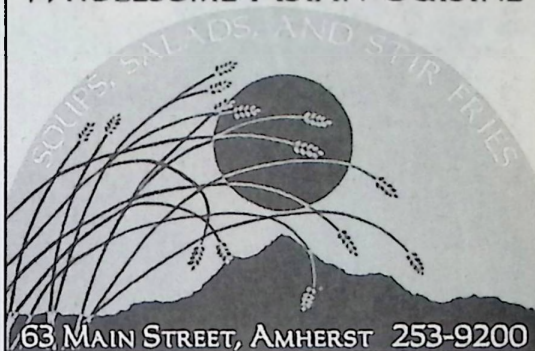
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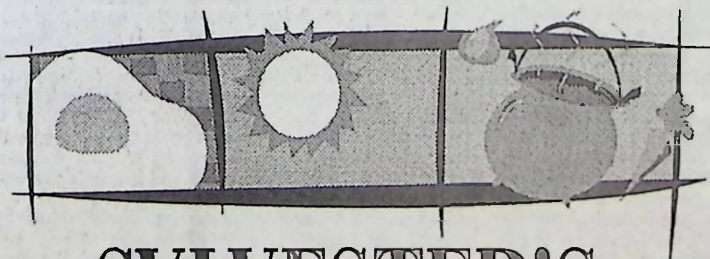
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A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR INCREASING THE SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY OF OUR SCHOOLS

Recent outbreaks of violence in Littleton, Colorado and elsewhere across the country have raised serious doubt about our ability to ensure a safe environment in our schools and caused heated debate among our politicians. It is scarcely surprising that these events have taken our public awareness with such force, for they come at a time when we had already begun to despair over the failure of our students to thrive and to view our schools increasingly as a microcosm of our society's ills. The recent defeat of proposed gun control measures, widely perceived as the best hope for preventing future attacks like the one in Littleton, has only served to heighten these fears.

Whether we conclude with Democrats that these measures failed because Republicans fought to alter them beyond recognition, or draw more cynical conclusions from the coincidence of gun money and votes on both sides of the aisle, the result is the same: a political stalemate from which any productive compromise seems unlikely. If Bill Clinton hopes to resurrect his presidency from the most widely publicized Achilles' heel in history, he'll have to begin by resolving this stalemate, and given the current climate in Washington, any measure with a hope of success will have to be one which does not seek to limit the sale or production of weapons. At present, only Republicans are willing to present such alternatives.

One such visionary is Susan Stubbs of Texas. In the wake of the Littleton shooting, when public opinion seemed most in favor of additional gun control and Democrats had already begun to celebrate their potential victories,

she was courageous enough to suggest that the problem may well not be too many guns, but too few. Congratulating her fellow Texans on passing legislation to allow concealed weapons, she noted, quite correctly, that we never hear of an armed assailant walking into an NRA convention and opening fire. Perhaps in this common sense there is the kernel of wisdom capable of bringing our parties together.

Of course, I'm not suggesting anything as irresponsible as sending all of our kids off to school packing heat. Far from it. Bringing a gun to school should never be a right, but a privilege which should reward only the highest standards of academic excellence. The benefits of arming honor students would be almost too numerous to list, but a few examples will suffice to illustrate the worth of this approach.

The primary, and most important, of these benefits would be the obvious increase in the safety of our schools. As Ms. Stubbs points out, an armed populace makes a much less appealing target, and we could rest easy knowing that we are putting weapons only in the hands of those students who have proven themselves most responsible. Indeed, we would be putting much needed arms into the hands of precisely those students most likely to be targeted by the more disaffected members of the student body.

I realize, of course, that such a bold measure will meet with some initial opposition, particularly from gun control advocates, bitter over their recent string of defeats. Adolescence is a volatile enough period, they'll argue, without introducing deadly weapons. To them I reply that not only will this measure improve the safety of our schools, but it will provide more opportunities for gun reforms than all their efforts combined. Mind you, I'm not saying that a few growing pains and even a moderate thinning of the student body would not be inevitable, but even here the news is not entirely bad.

As things stand now, the mayhem committed by disenfranchised students robs us of many of our best and brightest. By putting much needed guns in the hands of our highest achievers, we not only discourage such outbreaks of violence, but we create a climate in which our best students will be those most likely to survive any violent conflict. Ready access to guns is a fact of life, and we may never entirely eradicate the cancer of violence that afflicts our schools, but we can at least ensure that the numbers serve our long-term goals. Simple math dictates that fewer students per class, higher average test scores, and more attentive and moti-

vated students, precisely those goals we have tried unsuccessfully to legislate into being, are likely to be the result of this period of adjustment. Far from a political liability, such a plan is likely to guarantee an esteemed place in history for the president brave enough to enact it.

But the benefits do not end here. As this program is implemented and students inevitably grow more motivated, our schools will collectively become the single greatest consumer of small arms in the country, and as such they will wield tremendous political clout. Formerly, the NEA and other educational groups have had to take a backseat to the NRA and lobbyists for gun manufacturers, but their newfound best customer status will now not only put the power of these lobbies behind them — just imagine the gun lobbies pushing for teacher pay raises or providing complimentary computers for classrooms — but will also place educators in an ideal position to exact precisely those reforms which Congress could not. Superintendents and School Committees, when ordering their guns for the coming school year, can choose to do business with only those manufacturers willing to provide additional safety measures. They could, for example, adopt the common sense approach of fellow visionary, Bob Barr, and insist that the Ten Commandments be inscribed on every gun. The cost of these inscriptions to manufacturers would be minimal, but the increase in our children's safety would be immeasurable. Almost immediately gun makers will begin tirelessly competing to create the safest possible weapons for our children. Imagine the possibilities for reform!

And best of all, both parties can claim victory in the passage of this measure. Republicans can be proud that these reforms would be achieved through the benevolent drive of free market competition and not at the expense of the law-abiding sportsmen who thanklessly combat an increasingly hostile and resourceful deer population, or the grass roots militia movements which are so vital to the protection of our basic freedoms. Democrats, still stinging from the recent defeat of a proposed three day waiting period, can take heart in knowing that students will now have to wait a full grading period before bearing arms.

Some are born to greatness, some achieve greatness, and others — as many an intern can attest — have greatness thrust upon them. These are times that call for a great man who can see past the petty partisan bickering that has held our nation hostage for too long, and if President Clinton has the courage to present this olive branch to his adversaries, he may yet become the great man these times require. Now is the time for him to rise to the occasion and outlast the stain of scandal. If this should happen, let us offer him our full support. Let us no longer hide from the tough decisions necessary to ensure a safe and efficient learning environment for our children. Instead let us look forward a day when a "My Child Is An Honor Student" bumper sticker is not only a proud banner of academic achievement, but also fair warning to would-be carjackers.



IN A TIZZY

VMag.

Though in theory I am a big supporter of the local alternative press, I've not had much interest in your mag since much of what I've read in it is poorly researched and/or poorly written. Nevertheless, as a supporter of local music, I sometimes check out your music reviews, and when my sister-in-law told me that her band Tizzy's new CD, *Scary In Adulthood*, had been slammed in the June/July issue of VMag, I immediately went out to pick up a copy to see just how bad it was. This is where the story turns ugly: I read the review. The reviewer was someone calling himself Duke Aaron, or "Il Duce." "Il Duce?" I wasn't aware that fascist dictators had much interest in indie rock. And I certainly don't know what kind of spiteful person feels the need to write a malicious, poorly-researched review of a great band whose first CD was entitled *Befriend Us*, for Christ's sake.

I've been a fan of Jen Stavely's songwriting since the days when she was in Flower Thief, long before I was lucky enough to call her my friend or my sister-in-law, and I have great respect for all three members of the band. Where does "Il Duce" get off calling Tizzy's lyrics "sophomoric"? They are witty and clever, and I don't know how the reviewer could possibly think those "simple clichés" he says Tizzy has "a penchat (sic) for fucking up" are screwed up accidentally, like the band is too stupid to know any better. Get real. He also claims Tizzy's songs are "choppy" and that they lack the "catchy, fun, pop sensibility" of a band like Tuscadero. First of all, most of us aren't scared by things like tempo changes, and it's clear that "Il Duce" has never seen Tizzy live because they put on one of the most fun and rocking shows in the Valley. And at least one of the reviewer's colleagues agrees with me: in a later article in the same issue of VMag, Alec Drouillet says the Pangloss and Tizzy show at the Bay State was "[d]efinitely the highlight of the [NMF] afternoon shows."

It takes guts to get up in front of an audience and put yourself out there for scrutiny. Apparently "Il Duce" is such a coward that he won't even sign his real name to his reviews. Not much of a vote of confidence in his writing. I'd say, and a definite acknowledgement that the Valley music scene is too damn small to safely get away with writing this kind of

"review." The worst of all his offenses is that he obviously barely listened to the CD. One of his major criticisms was that the band "whine[s] about aging." Yet there is only one song on the album which is explicitly about growing up and that's the song he said was "probably" the best tune on the disc. So which is it? Is writing about getting older a bad or a good thing? The only other music review I could find in this issue by "Il Duce" was a gushing review of Tom Petty's new album. In the future, I'd recommend VMag have reviewers stick to musical genres they are familiar with. With all your sloppy research, unfounded self-importance, and vitriol, "Il Duce," I guarantee that your little "review" will soon be sitting at the bottom of my cat's litter box, keeping her ass clean.

Quite sincerely,

Rachel Stavely
Northampton

Duke responds:

Dear Rachel,

Thanks for writing. I'm always glad to hear commentary on my work and it is certainly great to know that you are, theoretically, a supporter of the local alternative/independent press. I wish the research and writing at VMag was more up to your standards, but can only speak for myself (I am a freelancer). Your letter has some good critique of my review of Tizzy's new CD, *Scary In Adulthood*, and I hope my responses answer it adequately. It is always important for small, independent, publications to take their readership's opinions seriously. I think your dislike of my name, Duke Aaron, is OK. I like it and am pretty sure that there is a strong history of people writing under names which are not their birth name; perhaps you could research this topic and get back to me. My use of Il Duce is a sort of inside joke within my family and is in no way meant to show my support of fascism in general or Mussolini in particular. However, I would suggest that fascist leaders/dictators/movements have always had ties to underground literature and music, and would illustrate this point by the contemporary use of certain fringe-element breeds of hard-core and the historical use of classical music to further racist, hate-mongering agendas in both Europe and the US. Was I malicious? Was the review poorly researched? I don't think so, but maybe I'm wrong. I didn't like the CD. Sorry. It was not enjoyable and I tried to give the reasons behind my opinion. This is called critique and is the basis of the reviewer's job. In terms of research I have a simple style. I listen to the disc in question five to ten times and then write about it. No, this is not an intellectual

approach, but jibes with the way most people interpret music in their lives. If you have suggestions on how to improve this system, please let me know.

I'll choose not to engage in a tit-for-tat on our very different opinions concerning specific songs and the over-all feel of the CD. It comes down to a question of taste and that can really go no further. I would like to mention that the misspelling of the word "penchant" was an editorial error and Murphy has apologized to me on bended knee. You are correct in the assumption that I have never seen Tizzy perform live. May I point out to you that I was reviewing a CD, not a live performance, and thus your complaint has little merit in that regard? I would also point out, as you have, that Alec Drouillet gave Tizzy a glowing recommendation for their live show and that these are two different reviewers, reviewing two different things. I specifically requested the Tizzy CD, because I had heard a lot of good comments about them and wanted to get the disc. In the end, however, I thought the songs were not very good and the production failed as well. Should I have lied? I think not. It does take guts to perform live, but my question for you is, exactly what does this have to do with a CD review? I did like the Tom Petty CD; so what? I liked it. I'm quite familiar with a variety of musical genres and have a large and fairly eclectic collection of music. So there. Na na nana na! Please let me know if any of your other relatives are in bands, as I would love to give their products a fair hearing. I mean that. I have nothing against your sister-in-law's band; I know none of them personally, and wish them nothing but the best in the difficult world of the performing arts. In conclusion, I am really, really, really glad that both you and your cat recycle. This should be a lesson to all people that waste paper; each and everyone of us needs to think about what we as individuals, and our society as a whole, are doing to the Earth.

- Duke Aaron
Il Duce

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'94 Honda Accord LX ... \$9,995

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'96 Honda Accord EX ... \$15,995

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